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Cover photo of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, 1985, by Sebastião Salgado/Magnum.

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READEX
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Amazonia Without Myths

Just prior to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Commission on Development and Environment for Amazonia released "Amazonia Without Myths," the first report to explore the challenges and hopes of the Amazon from a truly regional perspective. Unlike previous attempts to explain the complexities of this immense landscape, the report relies mainly on the views and aspirations of people who live in the eight Amazonian countries, including scientists, politicians, writers, government workers, rubber tappers and indigenous peoples. It was born of the need to promote a better understanding of the realities of this vast ecosystem, to separate fact from fiction and to provide guideposts for truly sustainable development.

"The Amazon is the continental heart of South America, and its destiny is critical for the entire region and, perhaps, for the entire world," asserts the report, which calls for a new global ethic to help the Amazon endure.

"Amazonia Without Myths" was proposed by the Treaty for Amazonian Cooperation and prepared with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-American Development Bank. Following are selected excerpts, preceded by the full text of the report's foreword, written in collaboration with Colombian writer and Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

More than 800,000 square kilometres of Amazon forest have been cleared for grazing and farming.

A Yanomami mother and child.

The oldest pottery of the Western Hemisphere, dating from 7,000 to 8,000 years ago, was found in the Amazon Basin near Santarem, Brazil. In just one hectare of Amazonia's vast "natural laboratory" are more tree species than in all of North America – and on just one of these trees can be found as many species of ants as exist in all England. This majestic basin covers seven per cent of the earth's surface but comprises more than half of the world's biological heritage. Its rivers contain one fifth of all the fresh water on the planet, and by itself the Amazon River is the largest tributary to all the world's oceans. More than 20 million people live in this enclave of age-old myths and fantastic illusions which, over time, have become intermingled with reality. This, in the world's imagination, is the earth's ultimate paradise.

It is, however, a paradise on the verge of extinction. Its slow and silent agony poses one of the dramatic threats for human survival. The common belief has been that the world would end in a Biblical cataclysm. But reality is more disturbing than that: the world began to die many years ago, due to the hand and disgrace of environmental degradation.

The facts of the matter are harrowing. An estimated six living species disappear every hour as a result of the massive destruction of tropical forests. Originally, many of the native tribes that inhabited the Amazon jungles, aware of the ruin they could cause, moved their settlements every five years in an effort to reduce the damage to their environment. The ancestral wisdom of these tribes is being ignored and extinguished, however, by the predatory actions of interests foreign to the region, which year after year destroy five million hectares. Thus have many of the native dynamics of preservation and survival been defeated. Of the six to nine million Indians who inhabited the Amazon, there are only a few dispersed groups. In this century alone, 90 entire tribes have ceased to exist.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the destruction of the Amazon cannot ignore the false ethic of the industrialized countries, which attribute the world's ecological disaster to the deterioration of the tropical forests. In reality, the principal causes are found in these same countries: the contamination of the air and the waters with all types of waste, global warming, the thinning of the ozone layer, the menace of nuclear holocaust. And the gravest of all: social injustice and chronic poverty which devastate the environment, the length and breadth of the continent and, in the final analysis, in marginal zones of the industrialized countries themselves. In this

The Kaiapo Indians are among the 400 ethnic groups remaining in Amazonia.

sense, saving the Amazon cannot be only a colossal undertaking of its natural trustees, but a crusade that all mankind can no longer defer.

"Amazon Without Myths" is based on the concept of an Amazon that exists above and beyond the world of fantasy and myth: an Amazon of flesh and blood, of human labour, human history, human faces and hopes, and of future human beings. It is an analysis based not only on the experiences and technologies of today's world but also, and with greater emphasis, on the wisdom accumulated for centuries by the Amazon itself, the standing Amazon.

Our first gratitude must go to the eight Amazon countries – Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela – which, with perseverance and courage, have kept the providential nature and cultural wealth of the region alive. Unfortunately, these prodigious and solitary efforts have been overcome by reality.

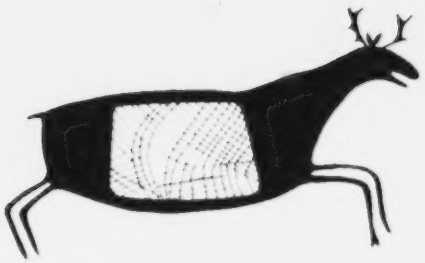
One of the great lessons of history is that the achievement of liberty must be immediately translated into common responsibility and a just demand for cooperation. Generally, political decisions have a deeper impact on international conscience than ecological emergencies, and the interests of state stimulate thought more rapidly than the penury of nature. In the case of the Amazon, the balance between these two forces is not only possible but also urgent, and this is the spirit in which the present report has been inspired.

Given the magnitude of the problem, we are challenged to change the global outlook: an international vision grand enough to fulfil the basic objectives of true development and to foster, at the same time, the ongoing welfare of the Amazon without affecting its ecological balance or the sovereignty of its people.

"Amazonia Without Myths" understands and explains this. Its call, therefore, is not a simple request for aid to save the region, but rather the urgent announcement of an inescapable commitment which the international community owes to itself as it faces its own destiny.

– Commission on Development and Environment for Amazonia in collaboration with Gabriel García Márquez.

Great cultures flourished there, noted for their advanced systems of agriculture and native art, as did numerous forest cultures which for centuries maintained a harmonious relationship with nature.



The Amazon – born of myth

The Amazon was born of myth. Its very name derives from the mythical woman, stronger and fiercer than any known to their imaginers. What these women offered the ancients, it seems, the Amazon offers to many moderns: a repository of misunderstandings and dreams, an object of myth.

Modern man's misunderstandings about the Amazon are themselves understandable, for the Amazon embodies those things which are larger than life: the largest and most productive river on earth, the greatest number of plants and animals, the most extensive humid tropical rain forest on the planet. Of the mythical facts we learned as children and have kept as adults are the myth of the single Amazon, the myth of the empty Amazon, the myth of the wealthy Amazon, the myth of the poor and fragile Amazon, the myth of the Indian as an obstacle to Amazonian progress. The mere existence of these myths demands informed analysis.

The inhabited Amazon

The history of the Amazon has ancient roots. Long before the arrival of the Spanish and Portuguese, the Amazonian vastness – from the Andean foothills to the river's beginning – was inhabited by humans. Great cultures flourished there, noted for their advanced systems of agriculture and native art, as did numerous forest cultures which for centuries maintained a harmonious relationship with nature. European occupation created activities sharply distinct from those of the original people. The price for the Amazon was very high. The forests were replaced, more than a hundred million hectares, by agriculture and grassland which today are mostly abandoned. The forests were also degraded by logging and extraction of vegetable products. Wildlife was decimated and most rivers were polluted by human activities, especially min-

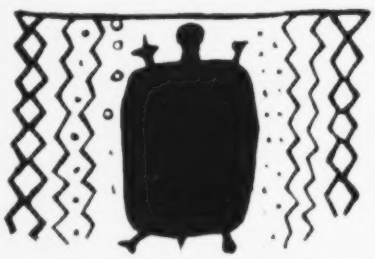
ing. As a consequence, the Amazon, instead of development, suffered a process of conquest, colonization and exploitation. The price was very high, and we recognize the onerous responsibility and heavy generational debt created by this situation.

Today the Amazon is home to no fewer than 20 million people, including people of the forest, native Amerindians, rubber tappers, farmers, miners, and people dependent on hunting and extractive activities. The majority of its inhabitants, however, grew up not in Amazonia but in their nations' zones of deepest poverty – from which they have fled seeking a promising frontier. Poverty and human inequities, then, are fundamental forces attacking Amazonian preservation. A large proportion of the region's population lives in the cities of the Amazon, mostly in slums surrounding each city's core, like those of other cities throughout Latin America. Like their predecessors on the Amazonian "frontier," newcomers find neither empty space nor virgin territory.

Amazonia standing

Despite past and present abuses which add to the diminishment of its forests and perhaps also to the supply of environmental services, the Amazon is still standing. Its extraordinary flora, which accounts for seven per cent of the earth's surface, represents more than half of the world's biological wealth, including hundreds of thousands of wild essences, trees of all sizes, many of them still not even classified and many others unknown. The importance of its waters is demonstrated by the fact that the Amazon River itself is responsible for 15.4 per cent of all the unsalted waters that flow into the oceans. Those waters are channelled through a maze of tributaries, lakes, *igarapés*, canals, rivers and creeks of all sizes and shapes, some following still undecided courses, meandering through forests.

A vast part of Amazonia is still standing today due to its vastness, resilience and the challenges to settling it. But we also have to recognize that Amazonia stands today thanks to the Amazonian people and countries. Amazonia's own defenders stood against intrusion by foreign settlers and extraction by foreign exploiters. Amazonia stands today, also, because the Amazonian countries have embarked on a number of actions for the people of the forest – in concert with preserving the forest itself. All Amazonian countries have made an unparalleled effort to create protected areas to preserve biodiversity, and have set aside extensive areas for the exclusive use of indigenous peoples to protect their rights and culture. As an example, territories of the Yanomami and Kaiapo Indians are the size of Portugal and Switzerland combined. Colombia has established, for instance, half of its Amazon territory for Indian reserves. But these are only a few examples of a little known series of actions in favour of the region's conservation. The nations of Amazonia, despite the severe economic and technological



restrictions that face them, have never failed in their commitment to preserve it.

To keep Amazonia standing

It is clear that Amazonia belongs to the eight Amazonian sovereign states. It is also clear that the Amazon cannot be merely a global ecological treasure or a global climatic regulator. It is also a major development resource: its sustained well-being remains inseparable from the well-being of the peoples of the eight nations to which it belongs. The principles of sustainable development should guide actions to keep Amazonia standing. Fundamental to this development is the welfare of its people and the satisfaction of their legitimate interests. It must also ensure the preservation of its natural cycles, its renewable natural resources, and its biological diversity. But such development must be more than ecologically sustainable. It must ensure, also, that human communities shall endure: it must be socially sustainable.

To reach our goals, we must seek to develop technologies adequate to maintain the fragile ecological balance of the region and simultaneously contribute to our countries' economic development. Ecological and economic zoning is a useful tool which should be expanded and promoted. The legal recognition of zoning and its close correlation with economic policies suited to the ecological reality of each zone are important elements for its success.

The forestry resources of the Amazon are considerable and, until now, have been underutilized and squandered. The careful use of forest management techniques to ensure sustainable production of timber and non-timber products is considered one of the best alternatives in preserving the region's biodiversity while fostering economic development. Amazonia may evolve to host a variety of parks and reserves in which forestry management is exercised at different levels of intensity for the production of timber as well as fruits, nuts, rubber and resins. Conserving biodiversity requires the establishment and effective management of the national park systems and the protected areas. These areas can contribute directly to economic growth through the prudent development of ecotourism.

Biodiversity: the patrimony we stand for

The rich biodiversity of the Amazon must be preserved and the rights of countries to its benefits must be protected. We must prevent the capture of that richness by those who, though possessing the scientific and technological capacity to commercially exploit it, have no intention of adequately compensating the countries from which that richness springs. The wealth of Amazonia risks becoming the wealth of major corporations. The need to recognize the genetic heritage of the Amazon as the patrimony of the region is central to its preservation. It is also essential that through patents, royalties or other mechanisms the Amazon countries be adequately compensated for the products

The longest river in the world, the Amazon winds over 6,700 kilometres.

of biodiversity they currently provide and which are now under global trade and biodiversity negotiations.

The people: the heart of the Amazon

Amazonian people possess a distinctive characteristic – their commitment to sustain nature. Indians, rubber tappers or *seringueiros*, and riverbank people live in intimate association with nature and in so doing have developed ingenious strategies and appropriate technologies that provide extremely valuable lessons for the future.

For centuries, the indigenous people have rarely been taken into account – except as obstacles to development. Now, however, the knowledge, technologies and culture of indigenous communities are considered essential for developing Amazonia. Today, after a long and difficult struggle for survival, more than 400 ethnic groups still endure, with a population of about one million.

Indigenous people are committed to recovering, preserving and strengthening their culture, languages and knowledge, as well as gaining legal recognition over the land they need. They demand recognition as citizens with equal rights. But they demand also to conserve their cultural identity. They want to preserve and be compensated for the contribution they make to technological knowledge. Learning from indigenous communities and involving them in the decision-making process is key to the development of the Amazon.

The Amazon is not an island

We must understand that the Amazon is not an island. It is affected by decisions taken miles away. The demand for petroleum or minerals and tropical products such as coffee, cacao, tea, rubber, lumber and oils, as well as the pricing policies of such commodities, have direct repercussions on the Amazon, a fact not taken into consideration by those who demand even stricter conservation of the forest and biodiversity. To break the vicious circle of poverty, which is both the cause and effect of environmental destruction, requires that we end the human anxiety produced by economic protectionism, worsening trade conditions, the legacy of foreign debt and the lack of a commercial infrastructure for commodities produced in the forest. As is well known, economic policies which provide incentives or disincentives for mining or agriculture have a direct impact on the Amazon. Priority should be given to the improvement of existing highways or the use of old river navigation systems. Decisions as to the construction of new highways should be weighed carefully as they can attract an unforeseen number of immigrants to areas which are incapable of absorbing new settlers without serious damage to the environment.

The Amazon is especially affected by the poverty that plagues regions such as the Andes or the Northeast of Brazil. Inadequate land distribution and management, land degradation, natural catastrophies and urban poverty push people towards the Amazon, the latter being closely linked to the lure of mining gold and other ore. Thus, one of the more efficient options to reduce deforestation is to invest in some of the poorest areas of the Amazonian countries where populations are forced to migrate to the Amazon to seek a better future.

To keep Amazonia standing calls for global solidarity and cooperation. It demands no less than a new global ethic: an ethic that will promote a different style of development, based on human solidarity and justice. This can be achieved through open dialogue – dialogue that mobilizes commitment from each and every citizen of the Amazonian countries and the world. ■

The full report "Amazonia Without Myths" is available through UNDP's Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, attention: Ms. Emma Torres, Chief, Division for the Regional Programme, One UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

EVERY MINUTE A WOMAN DIES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH. A BROAD COALITION SEEKS TO END THIS GLOBAL TRAGEDY.

WHO CARES FOR THE MOTHERS?

BY LOIS JENSEN

Washington, DC – A disturbing paradox of life in the developing world is the widespread death of women in the process of giving birth. For many women, childbearing fulfils a socially revered role. It is a means of gaining status which is otherwise unattainable. Yet for any number of reasons, including the perception that pregnancy and childbirth are a "woman's lot," over half a million mothers die each year from pregnancy-related causes. And for every woman who dies, 100 others are left sick or disabled.

With proper nutrition and medical care, the risks associated with motherhood are relatively small. In Western Europe, for example, only about one in every 10,000 women dies from pregnancy-related causes. In Latin America, the odds rise to one in 73; in Asia, one in 54; and in Africa, to an appalling one in 21. Yet no statistics can adequately convey the horror of a single death, or the pain and difficulties such a monumental event can wreak upon a family.

In developing countries particularly, the death of a woman at the peak of her productive and reproductive life can have far-reaching consequences. In her country, explains Anne Makinda, minister of community development in Tanzania, a woman would typically have a number of children dependent upon her. In the event of the mother's death, she says, the family would be expected to assume the cost of the burial as well as expenses related to transport, medical care and supplies. Survivors would have to purchase food that

the mother used to grow herself, or find someone else to take up agricultural tasks. If the family stays together – which is often not the case – a daughter usually quits school to assume the household chores. Younger children suddenly lose the person they were closest to emotionally, and who provided them with informal education and social guidance. For newborns, loss of the mother almost certainly means death.

The survival and health of infants and young children has been a focus of international concern for decades. But only in the last five years has similar attention been given to women in their maternal role. In 1987 a global "safe motherhood initiative" was launched in Nairobi with a pledge to reduce maternal mortality by one-half by the year 2000. In the past five years, research and advocacy have been undertaken to determine and communicate the dimensions of the problem. Pilot projects have been initiated in more than 100 countries. But with the number of maternal deaths still essentially unchanged, there is broad-based agreement among governments, non-governmental organizations and international institutions that the time has come to move from advocacy to action.

At a March 1992 conference in Washington, DC, progress toward safe motherhood was assessed and strategies mapped out for the remainder of the decade. The meeting was sponsored by the World Bank in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the International Planned Parenthood Association (IPPF) and the Population Council.

The most common obstetric causes of maternal death in developing countries are the same as those found in the industrial nations 50 years ago. They include hemorrhage, infection, obstructed labour, pregnancy-related high blood pressure and unsafe abortion, which alone is responsible for more than 200,000 of the 500,000 maternal deaths that occur worldwide each year. Experts say that more and better family planning could prevent up to

half the current number of fatalities. A combination of trained midwives, centres equipped to deal with complications and transport to those centres, could avert most of the other deaths. Equally important, says George Zeidenstein, president of the Population Council, is the availability of safe abortion services as a back-up when contraception fails. In a closing statement in Washington, Mr. Zeidenstein said that while the issue is "endlessly controversial... no woman should be forced to accept the serious risk of death or debilitation if she chooses to terminate an unwanted pregnancy."

In a number of countries around the world, maternal death is being fought in a way that proves that the effort is neither impossible nor unaffordable. In the remote area of Matlab, Bangladesh, for example, where 95 per cent of all deliveries take place at home, the posting of trained midwives – in addition to a system of referring emergency cases to a nearby medical facility – has cut a woman's chances of dying by 68 per cent. In Bolivia, a community-based approach to primary health care has resulted in substantial reductions in maternal deaths. It is also paying for itself through a cross-subsidy scheme in which curative services fund preventive programmes.

In isolated villages in Nigeria, training of traditional birth attendants resulted in a 50 per cent drop in maternal mortality over a three-year period. In Kenya, simple and inexpensive vacuum aspiration technology to deal with incomplete abortions is saving women's lives and alleviating an enormous burden on that country's obstetric wards.

While the knowledge and technology to prevent maternal deaths have been available for decades, the problem persists for social, cultural and economic reasons. In West Africa, for example, it is not uncommon that a husband arrives at a hospital in the middle of the night with his wife in labour, only to find he must return to his village to borrow money for a necessary operation. Then he must go to the nearest town to locate sutures and other supplies that the clinic cannot afford. In some Muslim countries, women, even in labour, are forbidden to leave their village to seek medical care without the permission of their husband or male relative. Even in India, where family planning has long been advocated and abortion is legal, these services will not be sought out unless women themselves feel compelled to do so. "While we may provide the best services on earth, if women do not use them, they will have little or no impact on maternal mortality or women's health," says Meera Chatterjee, a health scientist from New Delhi.

Of particular concern to many is the rising incidence of maternal deaths among teenage girls, who are frequently pressured by society into early marriage but who are at high risk in pregnancy because they are not fully developed physically. Often the complications of obstructed labour or infection leave these young girls infertile, crippled or social outcasts for the rest of their lives. Routinely denied access to government supported family planning programmes – as are unmarried women – adolescents are most likely to resort to abortion, whether or not it is legal, and whether or not it is safe.

Many believe that today's adolescents must be the prime target of safe motherhood efforts. The first step is education, says Nafis Sadik, executive director of UNFPA, which can "remove the fear that many women feel of the wider world represented by nurses and doctors, clinics and contraceptives."

Educated women are less at risk. They are more likely to delay the age of marriage, have fewer children and seek health care before and after pregnancy. In countries such as Mexico, the Republic of Korea and Tunisia, maternal mortality rates have dropped dramatically as rates of literacy and contraceptive use have risen.

IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, MATERNAL DEATH IS BEING FOUGHT IN A WAY THAT PROVES THAT THE EFFORT IS NEITHER IMPOSSIBLE NOR UNAFFORDABLE.

SIZING UP THE CHALLENGE

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
SOUTH ASIA
ARAB STATES
REST OF ASIA
LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN
INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES
LATEST AVAILABLE FIGURES
100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600
MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE PER 100,000 BIRTHS
BIRTHS WITH TRAINED ATTENDANT AS % OF ALL BIRTHS

Source: Human Development Report, UNDP

The synergism between maternal health and other areas of human development, including education, family planning and primary health care, was a topic frequently referred to at the Washington meeting. "We can attack maternal mortality only in the total context of human development," says Mahbub ul Haq, former finance minister of Pakistan and chief author of UNDP's *Human Development Report*. Halfdan Mahler, secretary-general of the IPPF, says that enlarging women's choices is "absolutely indispensable" to the promotion of social and economic development. "Once women have been informed and supported in understanding their reproductive health, and given access to high quality contraceptive services, then you have made a real contribution to enlarging the space of women's freedom," he says. "And nothing, in my opinion, is more important."

What will safe motherhood cost? According to the World Bank, about US$1 per capita each year to halve the number of maternal deaths by the year 2000. Besides saving hundreds of thousands of lives, and preventing many more disabilities, safe motherhood is an investment that could bring enormous social and economic benefits to families and entire communities.

"Even countries with limited resources can lower pregnancy-related deaths if priorities are properly placed and the political will is there," says Dr. Haq. Despite a relatively low GNP, only one in every 500 women in Sri Lanka are victims of maternal death. If South Asia had the same rate as Sri Lanka, the number of maternal deaths per year would be reduced from 200,000 to 25,000.

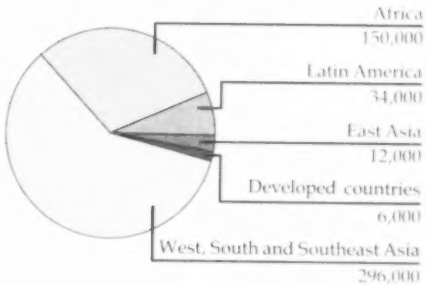
This viewpoint is shared by Banoo Coyaji, a doctor and director of the KEM Hospital in Pune, India. "I do not believe that GNP has anything to do with maternal mortality," she says. "It is women's status – not money – that makes the difference, and this begins with the girl child. She doesn't demand her rights because she doesn't know that she *has* rights."

While most agree that a revolution in reproductive health will require strong government commitment and long-term changes in attitudes about women, much could be done now.

The World Bank and other partners in the safe motherhood drive are currently identifying and costing out models that countries can adapt. These are based on a three-point approach that includes stronger community-based health care, reliable referral facilities to deal with obstetric emergencies, and an alarm and transport system to get women at risk to medical facilities quickly. To make such a system work, all members of a community – women as well as men – must support it.

"We can't change society immediately because value systems don't change overnight," says Dr. Coyaji. "But what we can do is make the present health system work. We also need to take the time to listen to women, to find out what their real needs are." ■

MATERNAL DEATHS PER YEAR



SOURCE: WHO

SENEGAL: EARLY PROGRESS, A LONG WAY TO GO

KEUR N'DIAGA SARR, SENEGAL – Twice a month, women and children gather for medical consultations in this small village in the Khombol district. As babies are weighed and vaccinated by visiting health care personnel, pregnant women wait patiently outside Mbayang Niang's consulting hut.

For years, Mrs. Niang has been the village's traditional birth attendant. But because of her recent training, the expectant mothers of Keur N'Diaga Sarr have a better than average chance of escaping the fate of some 1,800 Senegalese women who die each year from the complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

Most women in Senegal do not recognize danger signals during pregnancy. Fever, bleeding, or pallor and dizziness are usually considered normal. "Our initial idea was to train pregnant women to identify risks and possible complications," says Abdou Diallo, director of the training centre for traditional birth attendants in Khombol. "But soon we realized that it would be easier to train birth attendants, who have special status in the village and are trusted."

The one-month training is part of a pilot maternal and child health programme funded by Dakar University that covers 10 villages in the Khombol area. It focuses on prevention: identifying danger signs and women who may require immediate medical attention. Though most traditional birth attendants are illiterate, they are taught to record basic information on illustrated health cards. "Teaching women

Françoise Gerber / UNDP

Training of traditional birth attendants in Senegal has helped reduce maternal deaths.

who have never held a pencil to record information is the most difficult aspect of the training," says Mr. Diallo. But they do manage, and eventually, each of them is able to follow-up on women entrusted to their care.

"I know what to do," says Mrs. Niang with a smile. "I look for signs of complications, and if I see a problem, I refer the woman to the rural maternity ward." In 1990, of the 600 women referred to the Touba Toul clinic, not a single woman died. The same is true of the many women who delivered at home in the Khombol area that year.

Yet in many parts of the country, fighting maternal deaths is still an uphill battle. Dr. Fadel Diedhiou, chief of the maternity ward at Le Dantec Hospital in Dakar, was among the first health specialists to raise the issue. "Most maternal and child health programmes focus essentially on children," he says. "Only recently did we realize that a better way to protect a child is to protect the mother first."

With support from UNDP, New York's Columbia University and the World Health Organization, Senegal was one of the first developing countries to establish a national action plan to reduce maternal deaths. This is significant in a country where over 90 per cent of the population is Muslim, and where women in most situations are discouraged from taking decisions on their own. "We have three objectives," says Dr. Abdoulaye Gueye, national director for the plan. "We aim to improve the whole medical system in order to offer better care for women, to build-up their socio-economic status and to strengthen family planning."

Studies show that very few rural Senegalese women have knowledge about contraception, but most of them say they would like more time between births. Illegal abortion is a major cause of maternal death. "Women are rejected by society if they become pregnant without being married," says Dr. Fadel. "So they try to get rid of the child by any available means. Very often they arrive at the hospital just in time to die."

Sociologists and government officials agree that to change the situation, education is critical. The goal, they say, is to teach women to take responsibility for their own health, with or without consent from their husband or family. Toward this end, it is hoped that women's groups, which are active and well organized in rural areas, will play a key role. "Health awareness committees could be created," says Dr. Gueye. "Four or five members could be trained to identify risks and to help other women in the community."

On the remote island of Falia on the Siné Saloum River, one such group is desperate for a trained birth attendant. More than three hours by motorboat from the nearest health facility, and often lacking transportation, the women are ill-equipped to deal with an emergency. "Too many of our women are dying because we don't know what to do when there is a problem," says Aïssatou Dione, president of the women's group. "Nobody taught us anything, so we can only follow our traditions and beliefs."

While cultural factors are a serious consideration, most health experts say that upgrading the country's medical infrastructure could make a big difference in the short term. "Improving women's status and teaching them to read and write is important, but this does not necessarily reduce maternal mortality," says Deborah Maine, director of Columbia University's prevention of maternal mortality programme. "Women need access to medical treatment in case of complications and obstetric emergencies."

As in most developing countries, the best medical care in Senegal is found in the capital and in other large cities. But with recent cuts in the health sector, resources there are strained to the limit. At Le Dantec Hospital in Dakar, Dr. Fadel faces a new challenge every day. "We don't have blood, we don't have medicines, we lack personnel and supplies. I even had to close my surgery unit," he says. "And the first to suffer are women and children." ■

BY FRANÇOISE GERBER

FACING UP TO THE NEEDS OF YOUTHS

BY ANDREW ARKUTU

In Africa, early marriage and childbearing are culturally accepted and encouraged. Yet adolescents are at far greater risk of death or disability from pregnancy and childbirth. This is confirmed in reports from almost every country in sub-Saharan Africa.

The adolescent population of sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at 105 million, or 19 per cent of the total population, and is growing at a rate of 3.2 per cent a year. The number of females aged 15 to 19 is expected to triple by the year 2020. Because of their sheer numbers, and because they are tomorrow's parents, the problems of adolescents – particularly those pertaining to their reproductive health – cannot be ignored.

Surveys from a number of sub-Saharan countries indicate that sexual activity among teenagers starts early (around 14 years), and is much more widespread than parents and teachers realize or care to admit. Moreover, this high prevalence of sexual activity is accompanied by an astonishing lack of awareness about basic reproductive health issues. This does not come as a surprise.

Access to family planning information, education and services is routinely denied to adolescents or severely restricted by law, policy or practice. Contraceptive use among sexually active teenagers is negligible in a region where the overall contraceptive prevalence rate averages 10 per cent or less.

For the majority of young women, whether in socially sanctioned unions or not, adolescent pregnancy comes as a shattering blow with potentially devastating social consequences. In a study in Tanzania, three quarters of the pregnancies in adolescents under the age of 20 were unwanted. The transition from childhood to adulthood is suddenly cut short. Pregnant girls typically drop out of school and rarely have another opportunity to acquire technical skills. Adolescent childbearing and childcare almost invariably mean a lifetime of financial dependency, low self-esteem and a social status for the mother based largely on her reproductive role.

FOR THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG WOMEN, WHETHER IN SOCIALLY SANCTIONED UNIONS OR NOT, ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY COMES AS A SHATTERING BLOW.

Although abortion is illegal in all but three countries in sub-Saharan Africa, studies indicate in fact that the practice is quite common. In Nigeria, one such study showed that nearly half of 454 sexually active women aged 14 to 25 had at least one pregnancy, and that 90 per cent of these resulted in induced abortion. Similar reports have come from Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Tanzania and Zaire. Also of grave concern is the rise of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents, and exposure to the HIV virus which causes AIDS. One study in Tanzania showed that among blood donors aged 15 to 19 years, HIV seroprevalence rates increased from zero in 1987 to four per cent for boys and 14 per cent for girls in 1990.

There is growing awareness in Africa that adolescents have special needs that cannot be adequately addressed through existing programmes. That is the good news. The bad news is that attempts to come to grips with this extremely complex and sensitive problem have been characterized by uncertainty and confusion. Uncertainty arises from the conflict between deeply rooted values that favour early and universal marriage and the realization that the social system that supported and moderated adolescent reproductive behaviour within the traditional setting is no longer effective. This is especially true in urban communities where an increasing proportion of young people now live. The multi-faceted nature of the problem generates confusion in the minds of parents and guardians as well as policy makers and planners.

Several African countries have introduced education programmes on family life for in-school and out-of-school youths. But in order to assuage the feelings of parents and religious groups, the content of these programmes is often diluted to the point where they scarcely inform, let alone attempt to change behaviour. Similarly, very few countries have set up programmes specifically to meet the needs of young people. Since the problem of adolescent sexuality will not go away, an effort must be made to mobilize public support and resources to develop comprehensive reproductive health care programmes accessible to adolescents. Such programmes should provide strong advocacy for needed policy changes and legal reform through public education and community involvement. ■

Andrew Arkutu is a gynaecologist and is currently the country director of the UN Population Fund in Tanzania.

CREATING DEMAND FOR SAFE MOTHERHOOD

BY MEERA CHATTERJEE

We are well aware that maternal death is related to the poor access of women to proper nutrition and health care. Yet in India and many other countries, there is very little demand – especially among poor women – for health and family planning services that are being provided. This is euphemistically called "underutilization."

I would like to stress three requirements to creating such demand, which would move us closer to safe motherhood. We are tackling the first of these when we provide information to women and their families on recognizing the danger signs during pregnancy and on increasing the use of family planning. But beyond information, there is a need for women, families and communities to internalize the knowledge given. Health workers must be trained to motivate women to seek help when they need it. While imparting the message is relatively simple, the process of internalization is mired in the complex web of women's socialization and status. In India, as in many other traditional societies, this web does not permit women to easily act upon their knowledge. Disentangling the web entails education of a broad kind – education that enables women to see health and life as their right.

The second requirement has to do with cost. While bringing services within closer reach can reduce the time and expense of seeking health care, poor women will not use these services if they perceive the trade-off in doing so to be too great. This may be the loss of a day's wages or

FEW WOMEN KNOW THAT THEY MIGHT DIE AS A RESULT OF PREGNANCY — OR EVEN SUSPECT IT. MOTHERHOOD AND ITS COST ARE SIMPLY A PART OF THEIR DIFFICULT REALITY.

even just a mother-in-law's anger. For women to seek help, it must be entirely affordable.

Few women know that they might die as a result of pregnancy – or even suspect it – and families may not face the prospect until it is too late. Motherhood and its costs are simply a part of their difficult reality. Poor women, who account for the bulk of maternal deaths, must often choose between low-productivity work, on which their survival depends, and seeking health services, whose impact on their survival may be questionable. When the well-being of one woman jeopardizes the well-being of an entire family, the choice is seldom made in favour of health care. This is demonstrated by situations one finds everyday in villages, where women are more interested in having economic programmes than health services.

Once women get the message and are committed to seeking help, they need to be certain that the help they receive will be reliable. This raises the third requirement: accountability. Governments have a responsibility to make all levels of the health system accountable. For too long we have provided services that are symbolic, rather than those that meet the real needs of women. However, with the current strains on economies worldwide, governments are being forced to make difficult choices. We know from past experience that under tough circumstances social sectors suffer first, and that the most disadvantaged – among them women – suffer most. An overstressed economy not only exacerbates the problems that women face in their everyday lives, but moves health services further from them. At the very least, the process of structural adjustment should open the eyes of governments to this reality, forcing them to examine what they can and cannot do, and to acknowledge what they *must* do. ■

Meera Chatterjee is a health scientist and planner who lives in New Delhi.

Voices From the South:

The Environmental Agenda

While governments and people of all walks of life acknowledge the urgent need to protect the global environment, the North and South are frequently at odds on how this must be accomplished. The often heated negotiations that led up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June, were no exception.

To better understand the concerns of the South, we asked representatives from three leading developing country non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to express their views on the environmental crisis. Often, industrialized nations tend to see ecological threats in topical terms, and support stop-gap measures, such as better pollution control and more stringent conservation efforts. But developing countries say that the root causes of environmental degradation must first be addressed, namely poverty and the over-consumptive lifestyles of the rich.

VANDANA SHIVA — head of Prakrity Study and Action Research in India, an environmental watchdog agency

Photo: Pranay Sawhney

I think the root causes of environmental degradation are false notions of economic growth. We have built economic systems that reward the destruction of nature and penalize systems where the environment is preserved.

In forestry, for example, it is assumed that the natural forest is unproductive. It can be made more productive, "experts" say, by converting it to a single species that can serve as the raw material for industry. Forests that might be extremely useful ecologically and locally are of no use for industry. So genetically identical tree plantations that destroy biodiversity are created. Throughout the 1980s, the World Bank pushed for monoculture as a better performing system of forestry than the actual forest. The Bank encouraged the planting of eucalyptus, which is a very good species for pulping and a hopeless species for conservation, because it destroys water and nutrient cycles. We've had major protests all over the world against such plantings from local communities that have seen their streams disappear, their land grow infertile and their plant and animal life shrink.

Economic values have come to identify shrinkage of ecological diversity as growth. This is economics standing on its head. We need to put it back on its feet.

The only sustainable form of agriculture we have today is practised in parts of the Third World, in areas where the Green Revolution and chemical agriculture have not destroyed the environment. That's where communities still reward prudence, rather than greed; where they reward conservation, rather than degradation. Here you have a pattern of production and consumption that could be universalized without the planet's life being totally destroyed.

The North always talks about transferring technology from North to South. But the Third World has systems of knowledge, of science and technology, which we should start to respect. When a community in an extremely arid area is able to build an agricultural system that can do with very little water, we should recognize their conservation efforts, instead of calling their system primitive.

A good example is millet, which has been downgraded in the international agricultural system as a marginal or primitive crop. Yet millet is far more nutritious than wheat. It is also more diverse and water-prudent. But it grows very locally and so the food and taste habits linked to millet are very culturally specific. Huge corporations could not assume control overnight and develop consumer habits for millet like they could for white bread. So they downgraded millet production even though it is one of the best crops for combating desertification. I think it's time the industrialized world recognized that its economic paradigm is demanding too much from the earth.

MARTIN KHOR — Journalist, economist, consumer advocate and coordinator of the Malaysia-based Third World Network

Competition within the big market system is to a large extent responsible for today's environmental problems. Companies are not encouraged to become environmentally conscious. They have to make a large profit, otherwise they will be eaten up. In order to make big profits they have to expand. To expand, more and more new products have to be sold – products that someone will have to buy again in three years. Waste is built into the competitive industrial system.

This has led to what we call unsustainable patterns of consumption. Through advertising, big business has created a culture that makes people feel insecure, even though all their basic needs are already satisfied. That is how they get people to buy their products.

Distorted patterns of consumption are the real source of environmental degradation. Trees are felled, soils eroded, mountains moved, and minerals and energy used to produce goods and services that often are not really needed.

The cause of environmental destruction is not only poverty, but affluence. I think most Northern governments have been unprepared to discuss changing the economic model, along with production methods and patterns of consumption in their own societies. But they are very willing to talk about change in the South.

There are signs of hope. The North has recognized that we have to cut down on carbon dioxide emissions and get rid of ozone-depleting substances. The second step is to recognize that patterns of consumption must also change. Here, the political leadership in the industrialized world needs to convince its citizens that their lifestyles are shameful.

The Northern countries should be willing to pay higher prices for general commodities. They may be charged more, but this would reflect the true cost of commodities in developing countries. Then, the Third World, seeing higher prices, would be able to export less. As a result, fewer trees would be chopped down, fewer mineral deposits depleted. Economically developing countries would not suffer because every commodity or unit of nature would sell for a far higher price on the market. These prices would reflect the scarcity of natural resources, and hence the true value.

Our definition of environmental sustainability includes smaller-scale production systems and more community-based and locally controlled use of resources. As NGOs, our role is to work with local communities in defending their right to survive.

CHIEF BISI OGUNLEYE — national coordinator of the Country Women Association of Nigeria, and promoter of credit facilities for rural women farmers

The world is sick because we have forgotten to put people first. In the North, they talk of overpopulation, toxic waste, water and air pollution. And they have a right to do so. These are serious problems for the environment. But it's not the same in the South. You can't tell a poor rural woman to stop having children when she isn't sure how many of her children will survive. In developing countries, children are the only form of security a woman has. Poverty is the biggest cause of environmental degradation in the South. But until the North sees this as a problem, we will never see eye-to-eye.

If the North wants sustainable growth and a healthy planet, it has to learn to share responsibility for the world's problems. The North keeps telling the developing countries to take care of their own problems. They say, "it's not us who made you poor." I think the industrialized world could learn a lot from the South if people knew how much sweat went into the things they were consuming. I don't think many Americans, for example, realize the hazards African women go through so that they can have coffee, tea or cocoa.

The North must also recognize that it doesn't have all the answers to the world's problems. The industrialized countries look at the South as an empty body that needs knowledge put into it. They talk about the transfer of technology. But I think the North and South both could learn a lot from women who are putting their traditional knowledge to use.

In Africa, women have many talents, especially as managers. It takes a special model of conflict management, for example, to live in one room with your grandparents and other family members.

The poor women of Africa are the real farmers, the real custodians of the environment. But no one ever treats them like farmers. No one ever does anything to enhance the skills or development of these women. Women are rarely allowed to participate in policy-making.

The authorities should learn to encourage the talent, skills and traditional knowledge of rural women. We should have a mechanism of dialoguing with them, of allowing them to teach us what we don't know. There is a wealth of knowledge in developing countries and it should be used. ■

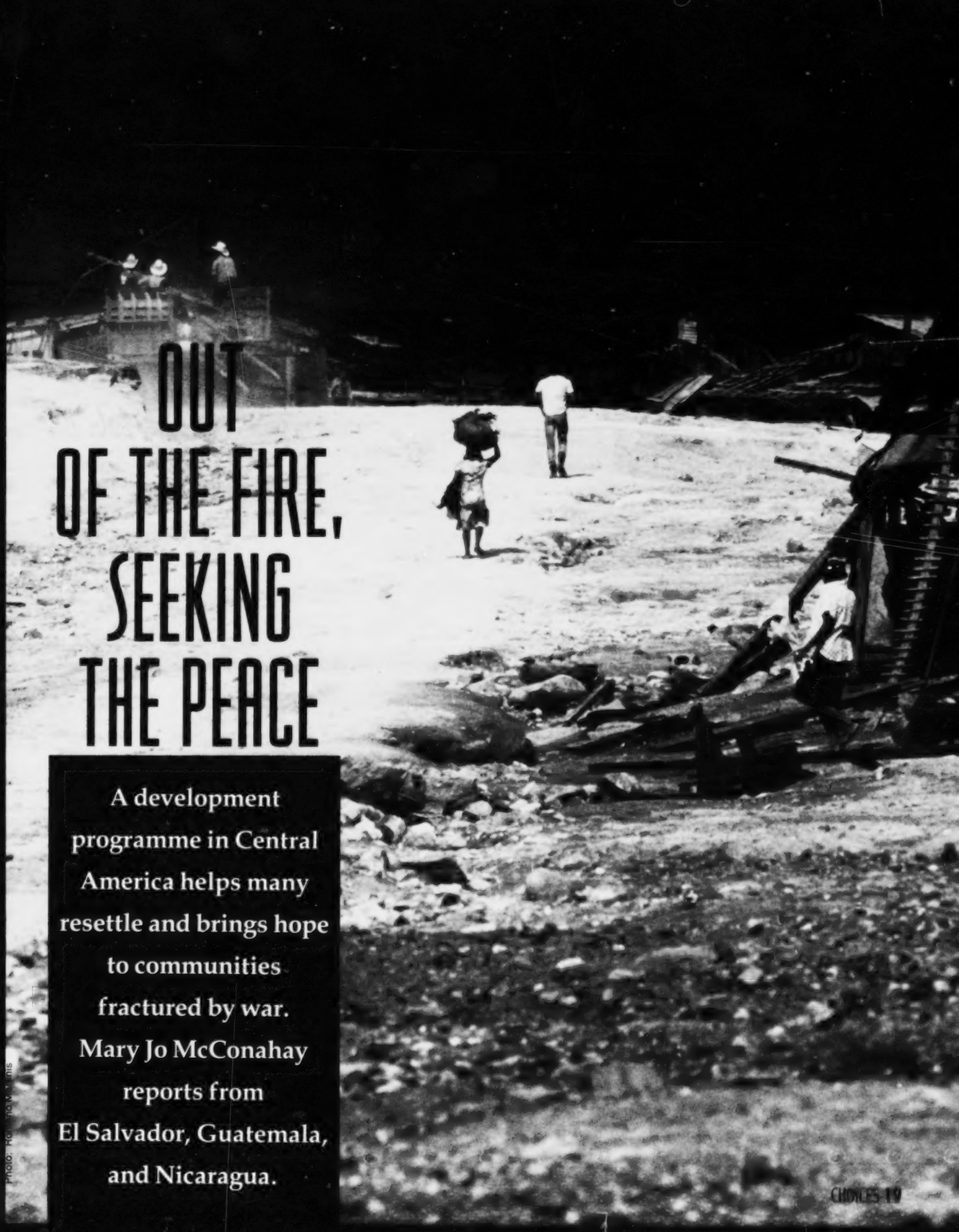
MILLIONS ON THE MOVE

A special report on the uprooted

In cities all over the world, the faces of refugees stand out in crowds: foreign yet familiar, dislodged but determined, detached yet dignified. This ethnically mixed and growing group attests to an era of upheaval and change — an era of dashed hopes for many, of renewed hopes for some. Propelled by fear of harassment, war, environmental crisis or economic necessity, the total number of the world's uprooted — including those internally displaced — now exceeds the populations of Tokyo, New York City and São Paulo combined. ❖ Although exact numbers are difficult to gauge, an estimated 75 million people are on the move. Of these, over 18 million are refugees who have crossed borders fleeing persecution. More than 23 million, according to the US Committee for Refugees, remain in their countries but are internally displaced. Millions have fled crumbling economies, civil wars or natural catastrophes — such as Chernobyl and the current drought in southern Africa. ❖ Last year, two million Mexicans entered the US seeking work; currently, an estimated three million undocumented migrants live in the European Community. In Djibouti, there is one Somali or Ethiopian refugee for every three nationals. In Malawi, one out of 10 people have crossed the border from war-torn Mozambique. In the last six months, over 200,000 Burmese have sought safe harbour in Bangladesh. And in Yugoslavia, that country's quick disintegration is expected to add 1.5 million more to the masses of the uprooted, creating the largest refugee problem in Europe since the Second World War. ❖ In other parts of the world, the reverse is also underway. In 1991, according to the US Committee for Refugees, 1.3 million ethnic Kurds left Iran for their native Iraq, while some 130,000 Afghans living in Pakistan crossed the border to make the long trek home. Fifteen thousand Nicaraguans returned from various locations in Central America, and 100,000 Somalis went back to their native land from Ethiopia. ❖ The refugee problem threatens to become one of the most explosive issues of the coming decades. While migration is perhaps inevitable, the international community can help lessen the flow by improving economic opportunities worldwide and by helping countries better prepare for natural disasters. ❖ In this special report we look at two examples where development efforts are helping potential refugees stay put and others to start over. In Central America, **Mary Jo McConahay** reports on a programme spanning six nations that has brought uprooted and rival factions together to rebuild their communities. In the Sudan, where an estimated 4.7 million are internally displaced, **Denise Barricklow** tells of an ambitious undertaking to help determined villagers survive in the face of the encroaching Sahara. Finally, a photo essay on refugees by **Sebastião Salgado** captures the travails of refugees from distant points around the globe. — Sid Kane

Jon Jones / Sygma

Yugoslavia 1991



OUT OF THE FIRE, SEEKING THE PEACE

A development programme in Central America helps many resettle and brings hope to communities fractured by war. Mary Jo McConahay reports from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

Photo: Ronaldo Mathews

Over the last decade, one out of five Central Americans were forced from their homes.

"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." – ***Psalm 66***

Los Amates, El Salvador – At first it looks like a place where death has won. The adobe shells of rural houses reach into a white-hot sky, broken sentinels in a landscape of sere hills. In shallow gullies bits of clothing and animal bones are still visible. They are remnants of flight and the kind of killing that spared nothing that lived.

In neighbouring Guatemala and Nicaragua too, villages like this one in El Salvador have been burned and pocked so horrifically that they seem rendered permanently desolate. In other places, residents were battered so grievously by the war that while they did not physically leave, their familiar lives shattered around them. To travel the war zones today is to watch a compelling struggle: peasants trying to overcome memories of cruelty and exile, to exorcise the land of its ghosts, and slowly, laboriously, to put down roots after they were torn from the soil during the decade of unspeakable violence.

When Angelica Morales arrived at Los Amates eight days ago with her husband, grandmother, six children, two cousins, and 30 other families to repopulate the town, they broke its silence.

"Of course we're afraid. If war starts again, where would we hide?" says Mrs. Morales, looking about at the spread of earth, scorched in all directions.

Mrs. Morales picked this house because it has several thick walls intact – "a start." Last night the mosquitoes in the yard – no one sleeps inside yet – were very bad, but now in the early morning there are only flies, and they are tolerable. The roof's timbers are charred and its old tiles black. Near the open fire where Mrs. Morales cooks the family's meal is an eight-metre crater made by a 225-kilogram bomb, one of several dropped on the village. Sticking out of a depression in the dirt is a piece of metal, a mortar round, its fanned tail intact, shot from a base 27 kilometres away. Mrs. Morales' husband, Natividad Serrano, says he and the others were determined to move back into this field of war debris because it is a place they might at least call their own. "We know it," he says.

There may be another reason. Mrs. Morales points to the spot on the unpaved road where her 32-year-old brother Rogelio and his 16-year-old son "died together." During other conversations, peasants regularly single out a tree or a porch to say that grandparents or siblings "died there." The Morales' show me a shady spot under an *amate* tree where they buried neighbours "after one massacre." Families, it seems, also return drawn by the spilled blood of those they loved. "Yes, it's true," says Mr. Serrano, looking around thoughtfully. "But we also felt it was time to reconstruct."

Throughout much of Central America the guns are falling silent, but the newborn peace is still fragile. In what many here call the region's "lost decade," some 100,000 died and about a fifth of the population of 28 million were dislocated, internally displaced, or crossed borders to become refugees. Arguably, peace with roots will only come when these generally poor, shaken populations can begin to feed themselves and watch their communities heal and grow.

It is an understanding that gave birth to PRODERE, a US$115.4 million Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America. The effort is managed by the United Nations Development Programme's Office for Project Services and funded by the Government of Italy. Its directors on the ground say PRODERE is not a classic post-war relief operation; rather, it aims to improve the living conditions of those affected deeply while helping to rebuild – or create for the first time – connections within torn communities that will help them sustain their economic well-being long after the programme disappears. Given that the violence of the decade grew out of poverty and hopelessness, PRODERE emerges as an attempt to get at the root of the problem, that history might not repeat itself.

In the Central American countries where it operates – Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua – the programme directs itself toward entire communities, including refugees, returnees, and those who suffered in place. By taking their lead from the decisions of local associations and planning committees, PRODERE managers say they aim both to fulfil real priorities while instilling renewed faith among neighbours in their own ability to organize for specific ends. Among programme officers in the field, no one tends to say, "We want to be an instrument of development," but rather, as Jaime Idrovo, director for Guatemala's Ixil region put it, "We want to be an instrument of the peace."

Across Central America, the programme has built or buttressed scores of community centres, schools and clinics. It has trained

Photos by Nancy McGirr / UNDP

After seven years, residents return to Guarjila.

thousands as teachers, in basic health, literacy, and in new agricultural techniques; opened roads where only trails existed; brought light and water to towns for the first time in their histories. PRODERE may be the largest and most complex single operation undertaken to date by UNDP, but here in dry, remote Los Amates, the process has just begun. Uprooted groups organized into committees said that some of them wanted to resettle this particular village. So PRODERE repaired a long-abandoned road, which now ends here among the houses and overgrown fields along the winding River Sumpul. The psychological infrastructure of peace may be harder to rebuild. These returnees, who sided with guerrillas during the war, are loath to accept back former neighbours who want to return too – but who sided with government forces.

Manuel Beltran and Maria Jesus Menjivar, who lost eight children, with a photo of an orphan boy now in their care.

"Why should I have to look at someone from ORDEN (a defunct government-linked paramilitary group) who killed my brother?" asks one wiry peasant.

If reconciliation and normalization are far from complete, a beginning has been made by the fact of the reverse exodus itself, by the delivery of roof tiles before the rainy season, by asking local leaders what they need next. ("Latrines. A teacher for the children. Fertilizers.") Sometimes now, during conversations while sitting on rocks under trees, crippling memories of terror can share time with a peasant's vision of peace.

"Avocado trees over there, orange trees and a coconut grove," says Antonio Serrano, who grew up in Los Amates. That is what used to grow on these hills, he says, and may as well grow again. "We're already clearing the fields for maize, of course, but this dirt is also good for cabbage, tomatoes, watermelon, even sugar cane. And we're thinking about how we might get a few cows, to be owned by the community, because the grass down by the river is so rich for grazing."

In Guarjila, a town of 240 families 37 kilometres northwest of here, the dream is closer to reality: after two years wandering in the mountains, and five more in a refugee camp in neighbouring Honduras, this community began to put down roots again four years ago, in the middle of the war. Despite aerial bombing and battles within town limits, villagers have maintained simple houses with proper roofs, and done the best they can to plant crops. The town's 700 children under age 12 can attend a crowded but central school, and a PRODERE-built medical centre looks clean and well equipped. The newly-tamped rose clay road almost booms with traffic to and from other repopulated towns – about a vehicle every half hour – to the extent that parents now scold children for nearing the "highway."

Nevertheless, war and exile are very much with Guarjila too, because people carry the recent past in their hearts, and wear its scars on prematurely aged faces.

"To live here was a crime," says Santos Rivera, 38, as she cooks rice over an open fire, using corn husks for pot holders. "We began hiding after they dragged my father – he was 62 – and my mother out of the house and assassinated them on the spot. At least now the gunfire has stopped."

Mrs. Rivera's husband David became a combatant, and died fighting in 1989, leaving behind their two-year-old daughter. Then an older daughter went to war as well, leaving Mrs. Rivera with her baby; the young woman died too. The youngsters now play in the dirt at Mrs. Rivera's feet, child and grandchild, a bit shaken when a commercial jet flies overhead, reacting to memories of enemy aircraft. A neighbour, Amanda Rivera, spreads fermenting *aceituno* fruit skins on the ground that she will use to make soap. She counts in her mind those she has lost to the violence – brothers, sisters, in-laws, children – then quietly tells the number: 24. Both women use the word "freedom" when I asked why they didn't stay in a safer place somewhere else, in a foreign country or in one of El Salvador's growing cities, instead of returning to this outpost.

"This land gives life, we can farm here, and we have always felt more freedom here

To travel the war zones today is to watch a compelling struggle: peasants trying to overcome memories of cruelty and exile, to exorcise the land of its ghosts, and slowly, laboriously, to put down roots after they were torn from the soil during the decade of unspeakable violence.

because it is somehow ours, even in the midst of war," says Mrs. Rivera.

Peasants in Guarjila may act with humble demeanour compared to urban residents, but they are not shy about what they see as their importance in shaping great events. "It is the strength of people like us, demanding to live in peace where we want, that accomplished the peace accords," announces community leader Miguel Beltran.

We are walking past an open-walled structure, created from a few rough wood benches placed under a thatch roof after shells destroyed the town's venerable original church. Incongruous amid the spare construction, a finely carved Spanish saint that survived the shelling stands alone on the altar, a poster of the assassinated Archbishop Oscar Romero pinned to his cassock. From a tree branch hang two old brass bells, one with a clapper. A young boy jolts along a rocky path with a stick and dark glasses, whistling the navigating whistle of the blind. "*Mina*," says Mr. Beltran in explanation. Land-mine.

In fact, leftover mines are less a worry for this village than what Mr. Beltran calls the "trauma" of the moment. "The situation is delicate, and people ask themselves, 'if the accords are not fulfilled, will there be another confrontation? War, again?' The children stay quiet but they hear the fear in voices, and later ask, looking terrified, 'what could happen?'"

In these strongly religious people, whose dependence on each other was forged during years of wandering and shared sorrow, community organization is already well developed. Guarjila, for instance, has action committees for women's affairs, education, farm production and clothes-making, among others. But the returnees to Los Amates and Guarjila live in a zone in which there is a certain homogeneity of history and perspective, where the former "enemy" hardly dare to show their faces – at least for the moment.

But what of trying to make a life in an equally poor region where a different history means once-mortal foes must grit their teeth and live as neighbours, make a go of peace together, or fall back together into the fire?

That is the picture in Nicaragua, where the recent civil war took place largely in the mountains and jungles far north of the capital.

"This land gives life, we can farm here, and we have always felt more freedom here because it is somehow ours, even in the midst of war."

In Managua they say you are going *a la montana* when you head north out of the city. It means "to the mountain." But behind the words is a sense that you are going far from where the laws of ordered urban life apply, into places out of the way and ruled by an intimacy with violence that remains beyond the understanding of many in the capital.

For an hour or two the drive cuts straight through the scrub and dry, stony riverbeds; white cattle nibble at sparse bushes, and on a few *jicaro* trees. The narrow highway begins to climb, and suddenly, it is *la montana*. The ridges explode with lush spruce, and groves of *elequeme* trees fire the gullies, their big orange flowers reaching up by the thousands like the fingers of upended hands. As the mountain road crests and descends again, a huge, patchwork valley spreads below, the rich but torn lands where, as they say here, "the war has ended, but peace has not arrived."

Bernabe Balladares is trying to shape the peace. An agronomist, Mr. Balladares is spending a typical evening at the house on the main dirt street that serves as PRODERE headquarters in Pantasma, where he directs the local programme.

"How are your beans? What's production up to? How's that hand?" He is quizzing a local farmer who has dropped by, whose fingers are bandaged from a machete wound.

Outside, lights are going on the length of the street (much of the installation by PRODERE). Residents find their way to the small shops, to the evangelical churches where they join in clapping and singing, or tie their horses to hitching posts in front of saloons in scenes reminiscent of the American old West.

Inside, Mr. Balladares is in his glory, pointing to maps and charts that show the grand Pantasma valley and its mountain hamlets divided into micro-regions according to production characteristics: basic grains, small cattle raising, coffee, a little fishing and tobacco farming. Nicaraguan-born and trained, Mr. Balladares says he has quit internationally-funded development projects before when they were overtaken by local political interests that ultimately controlled the purse-strings. His hope is that by providing loans directly to peasants, PRODERE will avoid that pitfall.

"Forty-five thousand men in my country have been disarmed in the last two years," Mr. Balladares says. "Guns were their way of living, so to take them away leaves the men.

most of them peasants, up in the air. If they don't have a dream of how they will survive, of how they will make do for their families in a dignified manner, they will return to arms."

In fact, the neighbourhood is still perilous. A courier drops off paperwork. Before he jumps back into the white UN pick-up to continue into *la montaña*, he asks the question I heard many times in this very town during the heat of the war.

"*¿Hay peligro?*"
"Is there danger?"
"No, it's all right tonight," says Mr. Balladares.
"What was that about?" I ask later.
"Conservation of life," he answers.

In the next days, the town mayor will tell me how he was captured, terrorized, and held for two days as a human bargaining chip when 300 former Sandinista army troops took over Pantasma last fall, making demands of the government. A local PRODERE expert will describe his own capture by the other side, a band of former Contra rebel troops, as he surveyed a potential farm project with two other professionals. (There were long hours of a kind of psychological torture, forced banter mixed with death threats, and freedom only after negotiation with government and UN personnel.) Even now, in a major provincial town north of here called Ocotal, 1,200 former Sandinista soldiers and 300 former Contras have "joined forces" to occupy the town and demand land and benefits from the government. As the night closes around us, army helicopters fly in to confront them.

Mr. Balladares is awake until after midnight, communicating by radio with headquarters (there is no telephone or telegraph service in town). He is preparing for an important meeting of representatives of the 40,000 residents of this wide-flung region who have felt the brunt of the war. "I can get notes to elected directors and gather the 350 committee people in a week for a meeting, even though there's no roads or mail service," he says proudly, long after the rest of the staff have retired to bed.

PRODERE has supported the building of schools, health clinics and community centres throughout Central America.

About 40 per cent of PRODERE's budget goes for credit to small farmers.

What stands out for the moment is the fact that farmers are pulling together to make the programme work, putting aside ideology, even memory.

Early the next morning, Pantasma's street belongs to pigs and a few pair of oxen, linked with stout wooden yokes, lumbering alongside lean, booted farmers. By noon, however, the peasants of the committee and a few men and women who work alongside them as advisers have gathered in a newly constructed multi-purpose building. The problem under discussion is serious, as Ariel Salinas, vice-director of the local branch of the national bank that administers PRODERE's loans, explains: "People have in mind that these loans are a gift, and as prices for coffee and grains are down, repayment is less than 10 per cent. This will mean the end of the project in one or two years."

Mr. Salinas attends the meeting, as do Mr. Balladares and other UN personnel. But what is important is that the committee members spend the next couple of hours talking the problem out among themselves. This, despite the fact that they represent both sides in the civil war and several months ago might just as easily have watched each other die as try to work out a common solution to their shared dilemma.

More than $193,000 in credit has already been given to 747 producers, they hear. These loans are the lifeblood of the small farmer, and the backbone of the local project — some 40 per cent of PRODERE's budget is for direct credit to poor farmers. But unless these loans are repaid, there will be no money left to re-loan, no re-investment. And the committee's dream of self-sufficiency will slip away.

What all here want to see, besides increased production and viability for individual farmers, is that their committee one day becomes a commercial association with the farmers as members; that it shows itself to be so responsible and self-sustaining that it can get support on its own for further development, from the National Development Bank or international funders. The meeting is long. In the growing heat, women and children ride by on horseback as if in slow motion, umbrellas up against the sun. *Acopio*, "collection," is the word of the day, and a plan is finally born "for the recuperation of credit."

The committee members will take the message back to their scattered hamlets, call meetings, and put pressure on deadbeats. The programme is set up so that these locally

elected officials are responsible for recommending – or rejecting – their neighbours for new loans. PRODERE supports the local school, children's meal kitchens and a health programme, so the schoolteacher, a sociologist and the doctor become part of the collection plan too, instructing peasants and their families at each contact about the importance of loan repayment to the continuation of every aspect of the programme.

While no one downplays the importance of sustainability as a goal, what stands out for the moment is the fact that the farmers are pulling together to make the programme work, putting aside ideology, even memory. It cannot be easy.

On October 18, 1983, in one of the key events of the war, 400 Contras took over this town in violent battles, killing school teachers, police and state cooperative leaders – 50 persons in all – and burned to ashes everything that represented the Sandinista government: the school, tractors, even Ariel Salinas' bank. Residents were forced to inform on one another or were shot; others, feeling repressed by the Sandinistas, needed little encouragement to offer information. Several Contra officers were from nearby villages and a number of scores were settled. The Sandinistas, always suspicious of this region where they felt loyalty was not strong, were quick and vicious in reprisals.

The prospect of revisiting the military base here is discomfiting. The last time I was here, in the months after the terror of 1983, nights were tense and sleepless. Pro-Sandinista troops, many of them militia from the remote villages, expected an attack, perhaps from their own neighbours. Pro-Contra residents nearby acted surly toward outsiders, suspicious of everyone. In an open shed near the command post were stacked dozens of empty metal coffins. There had been a battle with many dead, but the weather was so hot and the coffins so long in arriving that the soldiers had already buried the corpses communally.

In a powerfully symbolic move, the army recently turned the base over to PRODERE, so that the community – all the community – might transform it into an institute to educate themselves about production, especially of non-traditional crops that might bring in cash. As we near the gate, young PRODERE workers spontaneously sing out with triumphal voices the expectant opening notes of Beethoven's Fifth, and there is a smell of fresh cement in the air. The peasant committee members arriving for the inauguration are silent at first, and walk in separate groups into the newly-painted green and yellow buildings. Some are Sandinista *cooperativistas* wearing straw hats, some pro-Contras in baseball caps. A hundred yards from the meeting place a tree with a bleeding red circle painted on it marks the beginning of the forest where PRODERE will help remove several thousand land-mines.

National programme director Jairo Morales says that, working together, the farmers must use the institute in a way that's "easily replicable in the field. It must be a kind of gene bank ... and have the nature of a business enterprise, as well as a social enterprise." Pointing to other PRODERE officers and addressing the farmers, he adds, "Our life here is ephemeral, you know. But this institute must go on."

The peasant leaders, now in more mixed groups, tour the new facility, looking somewhat proprietary. "It went off all right, eh?" says Mr. Balladares in deep satisfaction, nervous sweat on his forehead. This is what cautious peasants here are calling "a beginning." As two farmers – one in a straw hat, one in a baseball cap – leave the former military base, they talk animatedly about the economic viability of growing snow peas.

In Guatemala, where Latin America's longest running leftist insurgency continues, PRODERE proceeds literally under fire.

In El Salvador and Nicaragua, PRODERE at least operates in the wake of declared cease-fires, albeit in an atmosphere of remembered fear and bloodshed. In Guatemala, however, where Latin America's longest running leftist insurgency has continued for 30 years, PRODERE proceeds literally under fire.

Three of its trucks have been attacked and burned – without injuries or loss of life – in an area where guerrillas and the army are at war. The chief of operations for the government's resettlement agency argues strongly against PRODERE's insistence on giving aid to remote settlements which are out of the military's effective control. And privately, even some PRODERE personnel outside the country express reservations about the wisdom of attempting to function in such a volatile climate, where as long as the war simmers, one side or the other might destroy the hard work or – more likely and more damaging – try to use the programme for its own ends.

Regional PRODERE director in Ixil, Guatemala, Jaime Idrovo, stretches the debate. "Look, it's different all right, working in a conflict zone," he says. "But what we are trying to do is to take advantage of the umbrella we provide as a neutral organization, to create an atmosphere of security."

That way, says Mr. Idrovo, confidence returns to an area where the social fabric has been shredded by war, even before the parties at the negotiating table sign off on a cease-fire. Villagers themselves, with some aid, begin to form their own productive associations again, reviving trust in their capacity to move forward economically, set goals, and become a force pushing those at the table toward reconciliation.

In Guatemala, at any rate, the theory remains far from proven. But there appears to be just enough calm in the mountainous Ixil triangle area for the vision to be tested.

In the village of Santa Avelina, perched strategically amid brilliant flowering trees on a ridge between two river valleys, Domingo Cordoba Vasquez says he has never heard of PRODERE. In fact, the 62-member village coffee-grower's association that Mr. Cordoba helps direct belongs to a network of similar groups whose parent association is supported by PRODERE with $700,000 in cash and equipment, which trickle down in pivotal ways to small settlements like this one. Mr. Cordoba and fellow peasants say the parent *Asociacion Chaim-*

lense has helped raise the price they get for their coffee by 50 per cent.

What is important, say Mr. Idrovo and others, is not whether ordinary farmers like Mr. Cordoba recognize the name of their major funder, "but that they feel they belong to an organization of their own that's responding to them with concrete benefits."

For Santa Avelina farmers, the local association is a way of connecting again with the land that they are determined to call home. Mr. Cordoba tells the story in a typical way. Like his neighbours, Mr. Córdoba speaks Ixil, one of this country's 22 Mayan Indian languages, so that when he remembers in Spanish he limits his words to a skeletal outline. But he uses a tone so pained, deliberate and stark, it compels the listener to imagine what is left unsaid.

"One day they came and burned my house while I was in the fields, and my wife was washing at the river. When they lost in battle, soldiers got mad and burned houses and shot people. People one knew. If one did not collaborate with the guerrillas, on the other hand, they shot you. There, at the roadside, they found my in-laws, but we never knew if it was the guerrillas or the soldiers."

Smoke fills the one-room house, wafting in through the open door from the cooking shed with its fire in the centre of a dirt floor. It makes eyes red and teary.

"We fled," he continues. "We slept under banana leaves in the mountains for a year. All of us were sad, the whole people. In the daytime, we hid behind rocks in bean fields. You had to keep the children quiet, or they would draw fire."

Sometimes they supported the rebels, the peasants say; sometimes they just said they did, hoping for protection. Reduced to wearing rags and eating grass and watching their children become thinner and more wide-eyed every day, Mr. Cordoba and several others finally presented themselves to the army. They declared that their hidden community wished to return. It was a tremendous decision because, in these mountains, suspected subversives were shot — or tortured until they died.

"We didn't want to die burned, but there was nowhere else to go," he says. "'Either we die, or we don't,' we said to ourselves, 'but we're going home.'"

The old production cooperatives — and many other grassroots organizations — folded when community leaders were assassinated during the late 1970s and 1980s. The Indians have since been shy about forming new associations. "'Oh no, my uncle died for the cooperative,' people say, so it was hard at first," recalls Mr. Cordoba, who was one of 11 members who founded Santa Avelina's association last year.

The *Asociacion Chajulense* is marketing organically-grown coffee in Europe.

For Santa Avelina farmers, the local association is a way of connecting again with the land that they are determined to call home.

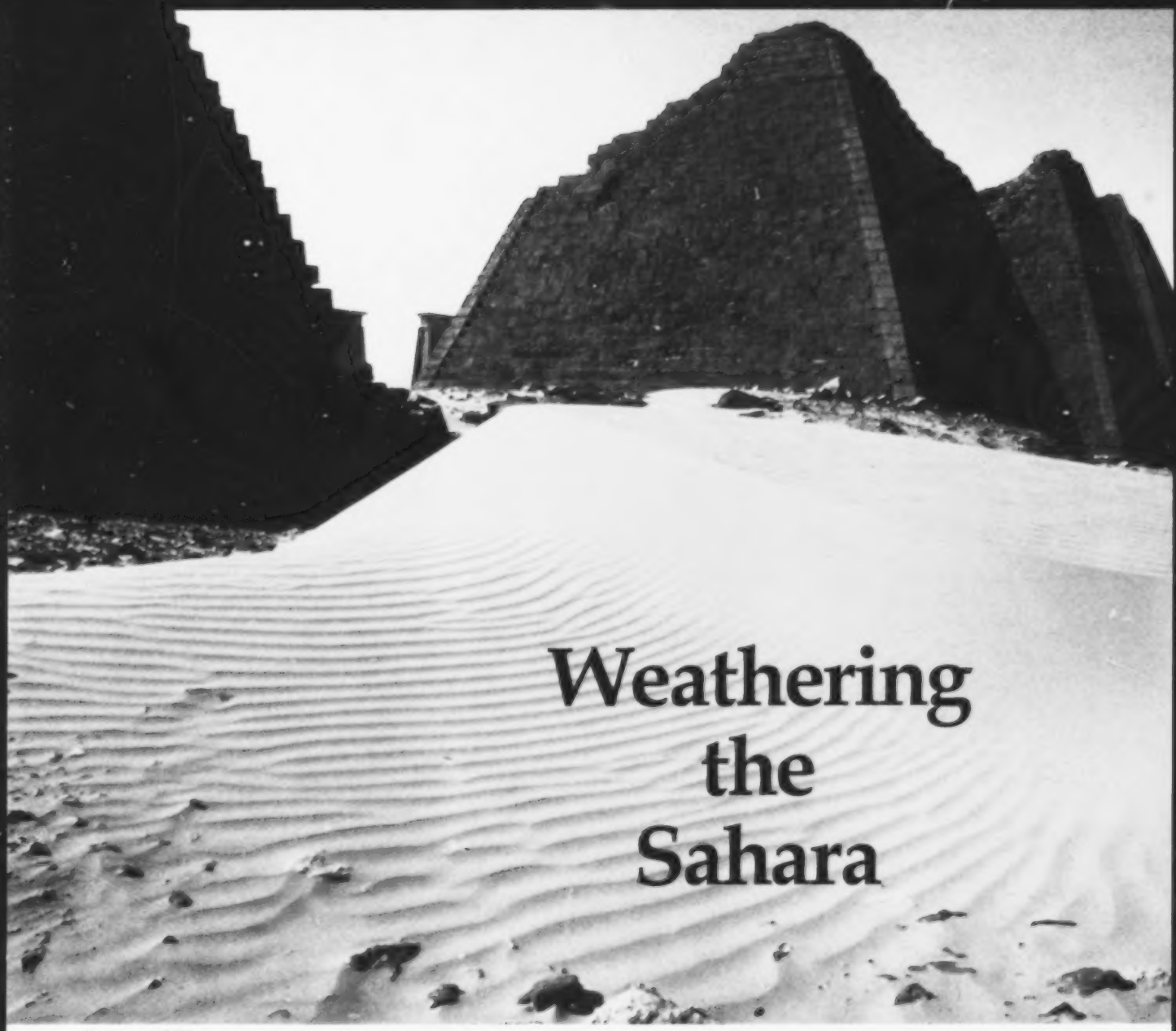
Now the number is going up, and the group is reaching out to others among the town's 500 families, reminding them that the *Asociacion Chajulense* also manages weaving workshops, and is beginning to advise farmers on organically-grown maize, which it will help market. The parent association already processes chemical-free, sun-dried coffee for the farmers and markets it in Europe. It is also training a peasant "promoter" from each village in new production methods, and instructs promoters in how to disseminate what they learn to the other farmers. When I was in Chajul, a seminar for promoters was taking place and I asked Diego Gomez, the elected representative from Santa Avelina, what he would take back to his village. "I've come to learn how we might get out of poverty," he answered.

Back in Santa Avelina, peasants report guerrilla patrols have been sighted on remote trails in the past two weeks, and residents about 30 minutes away by road say the boom of artillery fire has sounded to the south-east. At the same time, a few thick-walled adobe houses, an improvement over the kind of wood-slat homes in which the Cordoba and Gomez families live, are going up in this once-abandoned town, a sign of progress and the will to invest. The women are weaving their rich *huipil* blouses again. Probably not one in a thousand here can expect to see the sea, but the fresh *huipiles* look like patches of tropical reef floating along the dusty roads.

Coffee beans stripped of their thin, dark skin are spread yellow on straw mats around the village. The scene is one of great charm, but the men have a better idea. Mr. Beltran and another local leader, Baltazar Gomez, are drawing up a plan to ask for help in building a community storage silo. It would cut post-harvest losses, Mr. Beltran figures.

Mr. Gomez, younger and bent on expanding the association, envisions the silo as something more. "Imagine when the others see a structure so fine," he says. "It will make them want to join, won't it? To open their heads a bit." ■

Mary Jo McConahay is the Central America editor of the Pacific News Service and has lived in the region since 1983. She has written for Time, Newsweek *and* Vogue.



Weathering the Sahara

Denise Barricklow reports on a self-help programme in northern Sudan that is helping potential environmental refugees hold their ground.

Kordofan, Sudan – Last year, the stark sands of the Sahara spread further south into the Sudan, leaving behind a parched trail of death and destruction that has become all too familiar to the people of this beleaguered African nation.

The third drought in six years killed countless hectares of crops and wasted most of the livestock in the northwest of the country. Streams disappeared, wells dried up and dust storms buried once-green fields under a heavy blanket of clay-coloured sand. Food was so scarce that the destitute were forced to eat porcupines, wild grasses and tree leaves to survive. Eight million Sudanese – nearly a third of the country's population – were reported at risk of starvation.

A Sudanese family in Kordofan state.

Doomsayers predicted the drought would claim more lives than the notorious famine of 1984-85, which left several hundred thousand people dead. Donors pledged to provide less than two-thirds of the 1.2 million tonnes of grain that the United Nations estimated was needed to feed the stricken population. And the problem of transportation, in a country where trucks, fuel and paved roads are almost as scarce as water, made the prospects of a successful relief effort that more uncertain.

But the dire prediction never came true. Although the food shortage is estimated to have killed several thousand people, the majority of potential victims survived thanks in part to an international relief effort supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Currently, 80 per cent of the population in the northwest of the country – more than four million people – require relief, especially food.

"Six years ago, people left the affected areas in large numbers and gathered in huge camps where there were squatters, epidemics and massive deaths," says Per Ianvid, UNDP's resident representative and special coordinator for the UN Secretary-General of emergency and relief operations in the Sudan. The government's hope was to prevent a repeat of the 1984-85 famine, which saw thousands of environmental refugees settle in squalid squatters' camps outside the capital city of Khartoum. "This time, we may have prevented a migration and avoided the mass starvation that was feared at the beginning of 1991 by giving people the resources they needed to stay in their villages," Mr. Ianvid says.

That the emergency aid programme achieved such success is remarkable in a country where relief organizations have historically faced stubborn obstacles. Sudan's governments have generally shunned international aid, even during times of food shortfalls. But this time the current government decided to use such aid for the longer-term benefit of the needy.

In April 1990, Sudan allowed a large new UN-run relief effort to begin operations in the drought-stricken northwest. The programme was dubbed the Special United Nations 1991 Drought Operation, or SUNDOS. Officials say they are enthusiastic about it because, unlike another relief operation undertaken in the civil-war ravaged south, it is not simply a free-food relief effort. Instead, SUNDOS links relief with development, largely by expanding projects that provide food for labour. The US$15 million programme has seen wells dug, latrines installed, hospitals built and schools rehabilitated throughout Kordofan and Darfur, the two states on the edge of the Sahara Desert that were hardest hit by drought.

"If you don't address the real problems behind the famine, whether they are environmental or conflict-related, then dependence will become endemic."

Such a programme is more important than ever in the Sudan. The country's economic woes were compounded recently by cutbacks in donor assistance. The International Monetary Fund declared the country a "noncooperative member" due to its huge arrears dating from 1984 – a status conferred on only one other country, Liberia, and tantamount to expulsion.

"We are very pleased that the aid is being channelled into development activities," says Ahmed El Mansour Geily, the regional director of planning for Kordofan. "A very large portion of the population that was facing death from starvation last year has so

far been saved because of the relief help. But drought is a recurrent problem here. We need more assistance in rehabilitating the environment so that our people can survive on their own."

Development experts say a self-help programme like SUNDOS is the best way of aiding the financially-troubled nation. "In countries like the Sudan, the economy has been virtually taken over by relief aid," says Francis Deng, a former Sudanese government official and currently a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute in Washington, DC. "This is a serious impediment to productivity. If you don't address the real problems behind the famine, whether they are environmental or conflict related, then dependence will become endemic. Relief has to be linked to development, to reinforce people's ability to maintain their livelihoods."

The benefits of the SUNDOS programme can be felt in small villages across Kordofan state. Here, people live in cramped thatch huts or tiny mud houses built on flat expanses of shadeless sand. Latrines, wells and working handpumps are considered a luxury. Water is retrieved from man-made reservoirs or purchased from large diesel-operated pumps at "water yards," which are generally located hours from home. There are no paved roads. Most people are forced to move around on foot, with some of the wealthier villagers navigating the desert atop camels or donkeys.

In Farajalla, a village 19 kilometres from El Obeid, the state capital, a mother of six gazes over a seemingly endless stretch of sand dotted with lifeless shrubs and skeletal baobab trees. "We cultivated our crops, but they all failed because of the lack of rain," recalls El Sara Yuset Eldai. "So at the end of the year, we didn't have any food, nothing. Until we started getting the relief rations, I was worried my children would starve."

The 35-year-old mother points out the site where she and scores of fellow farmers are digging a mammoth pit to collect rainwater. The pit, known as a *hafir*, is one of the food-for-work projects funded under SUNDOS. "If there is water in the *hafir*, it will make my life easier because I'll be able to save the 10 pounds (about 30 US cents) I am forced to spend on water every day," she says.

Villagers receive training in basic health and hygiene.

In El Hagarat, a small farming community further south, villagers are also working together on water projects. Here, one small handpump has not been able to service all 1,800 village residents, so a deep hole has been drilled for a new well with SUNDOS funds.

"Before, during times of drought, almost half of our village would leave."

"We are looking forward to getting water so that our people will no longer have to migrate," says Ismail Musa, a 39-year-old farmer. "Before, during times of drought, almost half of our village would leave. With fewer hands to farm the vegetable garden and help with community projects, life became very difficult for those who stayed behind."

The scarcity of water made things even harder for the villagers of Um Oshara, a rural community of about 750 people. Here, the women get up every day at dawn and trudge four hours to fetch water from the nearest village, 12 kilometres away. Maimouna El Shareefe says the daily task has become more arduous since the drought killed the donkeys the women had used to help transport their load.

"Now we must carry the water in containers on our heads," explains Mrs. El Shareefe, a 45-year-old grandmother. "We have to stop three times to rest along the way because we get headaches and pain in our chests."

Mrs. El Shareefe says she hopes to be relieved of this burden soon. Within the year, the village's one broken well is expected to be fixed and a new one installed. "With the two wells, we will be able to rest in the morning and help the men with the agricultural work during the day," she says.

Besides improving access to safe water, SUNDOS has sponsored a host of other projects, including the construction of hundreds of latrines and more than a dozen schools, veterinary clinics and health centres. Villagers are being trained in basic health and hygiene techniques, including the use of oral rehydration salts (ORS). The health centres are especially important for both Kordofan and Darfur. According to a government report, there is only one doctor for every 26,438 people in Kordofan, and one for every 58,371 residents of Darfur.

Mastoura Absara, a 45-year-old grandmother from the village of Altina, says she lost a child because she did not know how to treat diarrhoea. "Now I will make sure my daughters boil their water and give their children ORS," she says.

In Woril, where a school was rehabilitated with SUNDOS funding, another mother

Photos by Denise Barrickclow/UNDP

Food rations are distributed in exchange for work.

Watermelons are one of the few crops which thrive in Kordofan.

hopes that her children will be better educated than she was. "I had to end my studies when I was 10," says 35-year-old Fatma Hamaid. "This school is very important to me."

Surveying the bright yellow walls of her newly-painted classroom, Mrs. Hamaid's eldest daughter, Intisar, a 16-year-old poetry buff, takes pride in the renovations. "Before, there were no windows, there were cracks in the walls and the blackboard had holes in it," she says. "In the winter it was very cold. During the rainy season, we wouldn't even go to school. We were afraid the roof would collapse and fall on our heads. Now, our school is very beautiful."

More than a dozen agencies are involved in the SUNDOS programme, each with specific tasks. The World Food Programme distributes food; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has helped set up grain storage facilities for the villagers; food-for-work and other projects in the water, sanitation, health and education sectors are carried out by UNICEF, UNIFEM, CARE, Save the Children (UK), the International Labour Organisation, the National Rural Water Corporation, the Sudan Red Crescent Society, and several other smaller non-governmental organizations. The programme is being monitored by government officials, who are receiving training in planning and management.

Most of the SUNDOS projects are expected to be completed by the summer of 1992. But some of the activities are part of an on-going rural development programme, supported by UNDP, which has longer-term goals. Known as Area Development Schemes (ADS), projects spawned under this effort focus on ways of maintaining arable land in the region. Nurseries have been built to grow gum arabic trees, which block the wind and halt the approach of sand dunes, in addition to being a source of income. Farmers are being trained to use drought-resistant seeds and more efficient ploughing techniques. Currently, most crops are planted by hand, and without tools.

But the ADS projects have proved difficult to get off the ground. The arid climate has been particularly hard on the nurseries, where the seedling survival rate is under 10 per cent. And UNDP officials express concern whether the fight against the Sahara can succeed in some parts of Kordofan and Dartur.

"The potential for sustainable development in some of these villages is small," says Neal Walker, the assistant resident representative who oversees the ADS programme from UNDP's headquarters in Khartoum. "The resources are desperately marginal. In some of these places, no matter how far you drill down, there is no water." Mr. Walker adds that it is difficult to maintain a self-sufficient farm or any other type of livelihood under these conditions. "But the fight must go on," he says.

Government officials concede that some villages may be beyond saving. But since Sudan is unable to relocate the desert dwellers anytime soon, officials say they are grateful for the outside help they are currently receiving. "You cannot move these people unless you provide them with a place to resettle," says Abdel Rahman, inspector for planning. "Here's a programme with available resources. It's a way of keeping these people alive." ■

Denise Barrickclow is a New York based journalist.

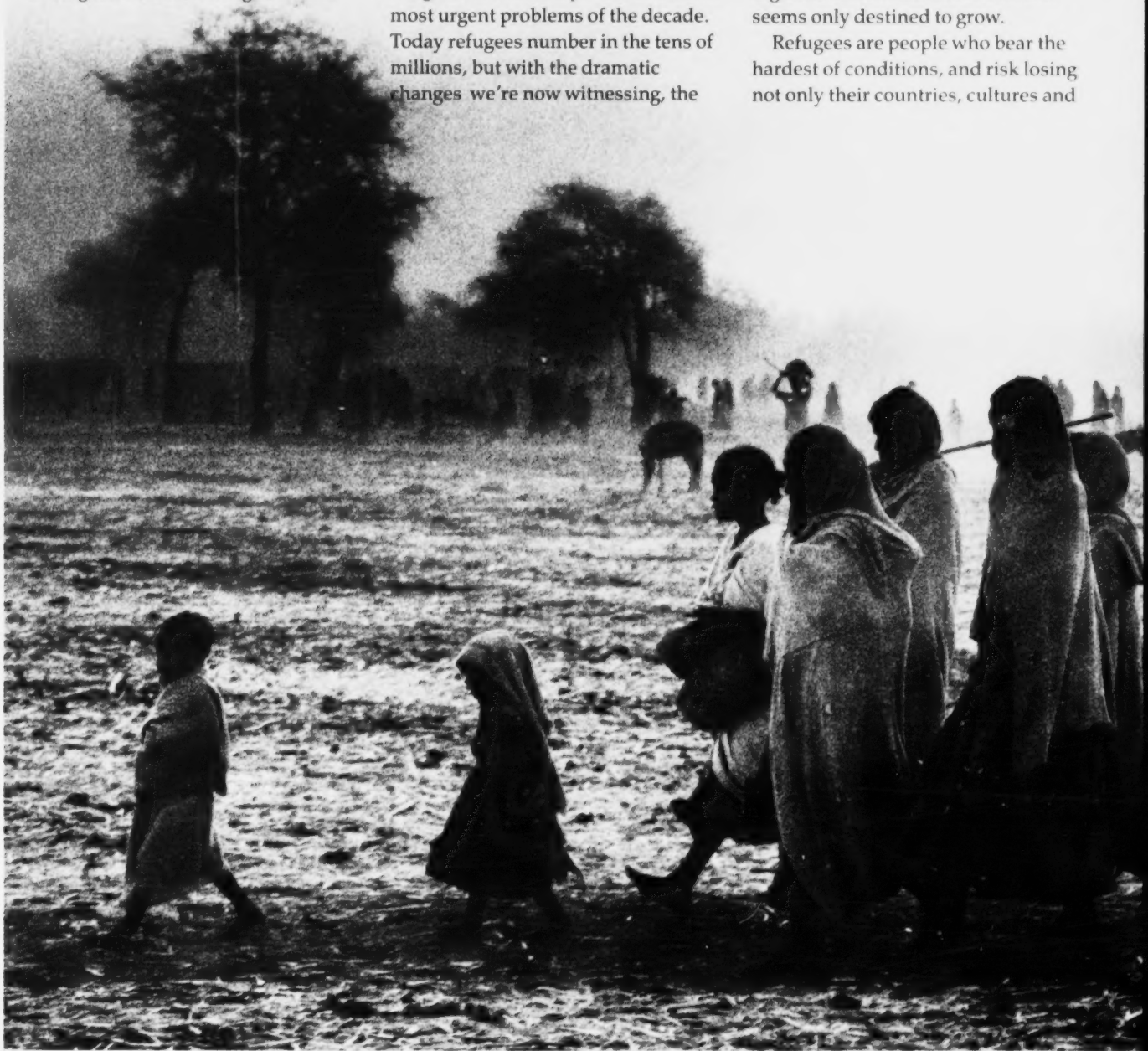
Images of the Uprooted: A Photo Essay by

When we asked Sebastião Salgado about featuring a portfolio of his work on refugees in this special report, his response was a resounding yes. "It's a subject close to my heart," says the acclaimed photographer, who lives in Paris but is on the road shooting most of the time. Mr. Salgado has captured the realities of refugees on film for many years, in countries such as Angola, France, Portugal, Sudan and Thailand. Long before these assignments he photographed the internally displaced in Ethiopia in 1974. "I want to see if in pictures I can bring out their dignity, because all refugees are dignified people, forced into situations of hardship," he says.

Mr. Salgado believes that there is no underestimating the gravity of the refugee challenge now being posed to the global community. "It is one of the most urgent problems of the decade. Today refugees number in the tens of millions, but with the dramatic changes we're now witnessing, the numbers could go much higher."

Originally trained as an economist in Brazil, Mr. Salgado, 48, took up photography at a young age and turned to it full time in 1973. He is currently preparing a photo-essay book entitled *Man at Work*, which focuses on various forms of manual labour – some vanishing. His interest in portraying refugees and documenting their often stark circumstances seems only destined to grow.

Refugees are people who bear the hardest of conditions, and risk losing not only their countries, cultures and



Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, 1985.

Sebastião Salgado

homes but also, in a sense, their souls. "People can get lost forever in these situations because children often put down roots in the places that they are, and in the process sever links with their home country," Mr. Salgado says. "This creates a conflict within the family as to where home really is."

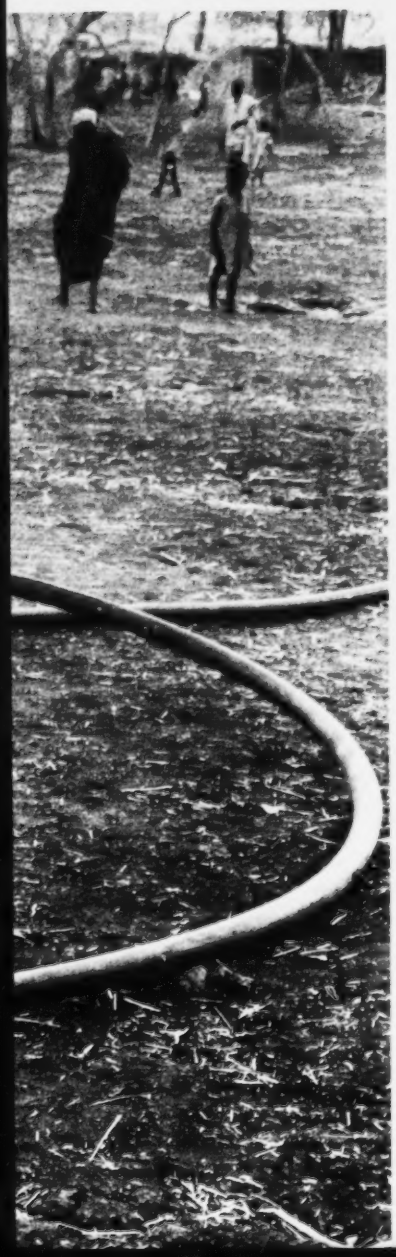
Hopefully, he says, his images will serve as a basis for debate and understanding, and will help focus attention on the plight of these vulnerable and dignified groups.

— Sid Kane

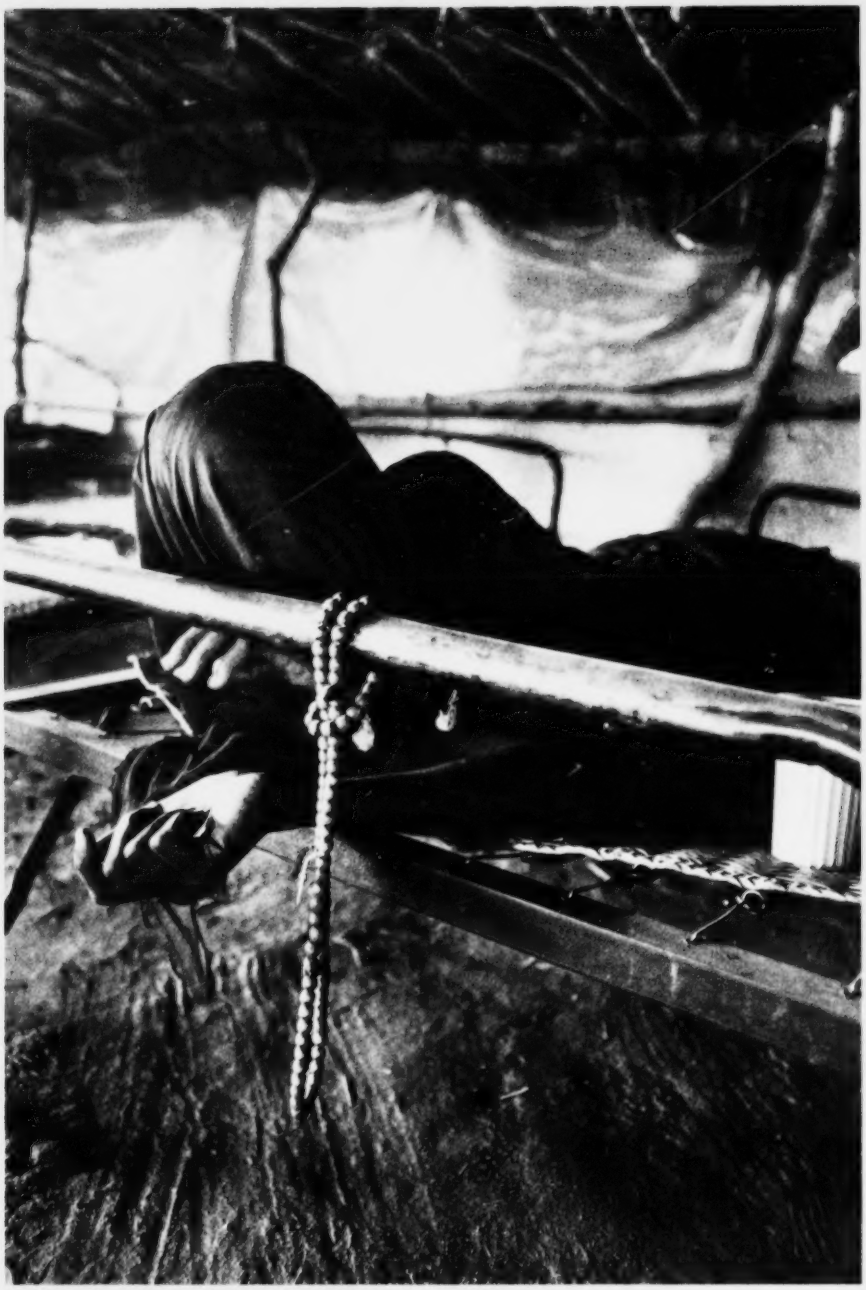
Angolans crossing the border to Zaire, 1975.

Ethiopian children in the Wad Kauli camp in Sudan, 1985.

Kmong refugees from Laos, in Thailand, 1982.



Angolans camped out in the Lisbon airport in Portugal, 1975.



A refugee from Chad in Sudan's Coudo Fan Province, 1985.

(*Top and bottom*) Laotian refugees in the Nam Mi Ao camp in Thailand, 1982.

Photos: Salgado / Magnum

WHY THE POVERTY GAP IS GROWING

This year's ***Human Development Report*** says that global market barriers — in trade, labour and capital — cost developing countries ten times more than they receive in aid.

By Bhaskar Menon

United Nations, New York — The *1991 Human Development Report* presented evidence that governments were wasting billions of dollars on the military while skimping on areas such as education and health. It argued that there was no shortage of capital for development, but that governments were merely misusing what they had. Containing a Human Freedom Index, it argued that political rights are an essential ingredient of development. Both the 1991 report and the one before it were controversial, as they raised issues that have not traditionally been dealt with in the international development debate.

This year's *Human Development Report* widens the scope of its view from national policies to the international arena. While still affirming that national policies are central to the success of development efforts, the report is critical of international markets — the driving force of globalization. The report shows how international markets in capital, labour, goods and services are inequitable, contributing to the growing disparities between rich and poor. It examines the role of political freedom and environmentally sustainable policies in human development. Finally, it pinpoints the changes in policies, practices and institutions necessary to deal with current and emerging problems.

International markets

More clearly than any other UN document over the last five decades, the report analyzes the operation of international markets from a human perspective. However impressive international markets may be at a technical level, they are of little value, the report says, if they do not serve human development. "Markets are the means. Human development is the end."

The most efficient markets are those that encourage competition by all participants. At present, international markets are neither free nor efficient. Capital, labour and goods do not flow freely around the world, and there is no equality of opportunity. Where markets are completely free and open, as they are in the case of international finance, the strongest participants benefit at the expense of the weak. In areas where developing countries have a competitive edge, as in labour-intensive manufacturing — there is no free and open competition.

Among the items the report cites to demonstrate how markets discriminate against the poor are the following:

■ Real interest rates have been four times higher for poor nations than rich ones. Developing countries effectively paid 17 per cent a year on their foreign debt during the 1980s, while rich nations paid only four per cent.

■ Transnational corporations channel about 83 per cent of their investment towards rich countries. Developing countries that do receive foreign investment tend to already be better off.

■ Trade barriers are highest for goods such as textiles, clothing and footwear, in the manufacture of which developing countries have a competitive advantage.

■ Agricultural markets are distorted not only by import barriers but by subsidies of some US$300 billion a year provided by developed countries to their own farmers. Developing country producers are thus denied markets.

■ Immigration laws prevent developing countries, which have the bulk of the world's workers, from meeting the demand for labour in developed countries.

■ In sum, says the report, the "lack of market opportunities for developing countries costs them at least $500 billion a year, ten times what they receive in foreign assistance."

The widening gap

The *1992 Human Development Report* presents a disturbing analysis of the global distribution of income and opportunities. In 1960, the countries with the wealthiest 20 per cent of the world's population had per capita incomes 30 times greater than the poorest 20 per cent. By 1989, the richest 20 per cent were getting 60 times more. When the wealth disparities within countries are taken into account, the situation is even worse. The top 20 per cent may get at least 150 times more than the bottom 20 per cent.

"The link between economic growth and human development breaks down at the international level for many of the same reasons as it does at the national level," the report says. "The poor have limited access to credit, capital, technology, and other production inputs in their countries.... The situation is similar, if not worse, at the international level. The poorest 20 per cent of the world's population receives only 0.2 per cent of global commercial bank lending, 1.3 per cent of global investment, 1 per cent of global trade and 1.4 per cent of global income."

Institutions

The report points out that "in practice there are no development institutions managing the new integrated global economy — much less doing so democratically in the interests of the world's people. Democracy may be sweeping through individual nation-states, but it has yet to assume a global economic dimension. ... This situation is dangerous for the health of our shrinking planet, and it bodes ill for the majority of the world's people."

In looking at the institutional shortcomings of the emerging global systems, the report is critical of the role that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have played in recent years. During the 1980s, as commodity prices crashed and commercial banks withdrew from lending to developing countries, the World Bank and the IMF did not act to cushion the blows. Though their lending to developing countries increased in the early 1980s, it was not sustained. Instead of evening out swings in international lending, the World Bank and IMF, in fact, amplified them. "Between 1983 and 1987, when developing countries faced a sudden exodus of commercial bank lending, net IMF transfers turned from plus $7.6 billion to minus $7.9 billion." Net World Bank transfers also turned negative – to minus $500 million in 1991.

The report also draws attention to the relative ineffectiveness of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (the main regulating framework for world commerce). Though GATT members account for more than four-fifths of world trade, only seven per cent of it is in full compliance with GATT principles. The Uruguay Round of trade negotiations could improve the coverage to areas important to developing countries – such as agriculture, tropical products and textiles – but the talks have been held up due to differences over issues of major concern among developed countries.

"The world needs a new vision of global cooperation for the next century," the report says, and suggests a number of significant changes:

■ The United Nations should be greatly strengthened, politically, managerially and financially. Member states should contribute to it in keeping with their income level, size and development needs. A permanent multilateral UN peace-keeping force should be created, as well as a 22-member "Development Security Council."

■ The World Bank should re-establish its role as sympathetic intermediary between developing countries and global capital markets.

■ The International Monetary Fund should be enabled to impose adjustment programmes not just on developing countries, but on the developed. The IMF should move toward becoming a Global Central Bank, creating and managing world liquidity.

■ The financial base of the Global Environment Facility should be broadened and developing countries given a greater voice in managing it.

■ The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade should become an international trade organization and its mandate should cover most international trade. Its executive board should have real regulatory clout.

Political rights

"The purpose of human development," according to the report, "is to widen the range of people's choices. But if they are not free to make those choices, the entire process becomes a mockery."

Last year's *Human Development Report* included a Human Freedom Index. Because it highlighted an area of great political sensitivity, and because its methodology was flawed, the report proved extremely controversial. Many developing countries were afraid that it would lead to the setting of political conditionalities for development aid, and at the specific request of a number of them, the index was dropped. What was developed instead was a Political Freedom Index, which, while not published as part of this year's report, is in the process of being refined. In its place is a discussion of why political freedom is relevant and important to human development.

Among the questions raised is whether freedom contributes to economic growth. The report points out that the "link between freedom and development is seldom in dispute. What is often disputed is the causality – the direction of the arrow, whether more freedom leads to more development or more development leads to more freedom."

On the question of whether freedom can be measured – a point raised repeatedly in the debate of last year's report – the answer is an unequivocal yes. "Certainly no measure of freedom can do it full justice," the report says. "But freedom is scarcely unique in this respect. The same is true of measures of income, and of human development. Indeed, many scales are now readily accepted for phenomena

previously thought to be unmeasurable. Even heat was once thought unmeasurable until Celsius demonstrated otherwise."

The report discusses some of the key components of political freedom common to all the world's regions. These include personal security, rule of law, freedom of expression, political participation and equality of opportunity. It considers which indicators could be used in each area to better determine whether the rights in question were being respected or violated and to what extent. "Considerable work is needed to ensure more comprehensive, objective and up to date sources of information," the report says. "In the meantime, work on the methodological basis for an index must go on because it cannot wait for the emergence of perfect data."

The human development concept

While the main focus of the *1992 Human Development Report* is international, it holds to the basic position put forth in previous years: that the most important determinant of development is national policy and practice. In clarifying the concept of human development, the report makes the following points:

■ Human development is not anti-growth. While the distribution of wealth is important, its creation is critical to improving the situation in developing countries.

■ Human development is not just to meet basic needs of the poorest countries. Every country, whatever its level of development, needs to address the needs of its people as a central concern.

■ Environmental protection and conservation are basic elements of human development for both poor and rich countries. Strategies and actions might differ, but the core concern is the same: improving human welfare. ■

Bhaskar Menon is editor of International Documents Review, *a weekly newsletter on the United Nations, and author of several books on international economic relations and development.*

BEGINNING A NEW DIALOGUE

Stockholm – "Too much of development is preoccupied with processes – the process of production, the means of development," says Mahbub ul Haq, former finance minister of Pakistan and chief author of the *Human Development Report*. "But what really comes out of it? How does development affect people? This was the beginning of our inquiry."

The 1992 report expands this inquiry to the international arena. It takes a critical look at global issues such as trade, capital transfers and international institutions. But it remains very much about people. "All of these issues are relevant, but ultimately their relevance lies in their impact on people," says Dr. Haq. "For the first time we look at income disparities among people, not just among nations."

The *1992 Human Development Report* was launched in April by press conferences in 22 countries around the world – in the capitals of Australia, Europe, Japan, North America and five developing countries. In Stockholm, the launch was preceded by a two-day seminar for journalists and non-governmental organizations from both developed and developing countries. Led by Dr. Haq, the discussion leapfrogged through a mine-field of issues in this year's report – from the subleties of measuring human freedom to the impact of multinational corporations. Throughout it all was the call for the beginning of a new dialogue.

"In the 1940s, with the end of the Second World War, we saw a tremendous burst of creativity," says Dr. Haq. With

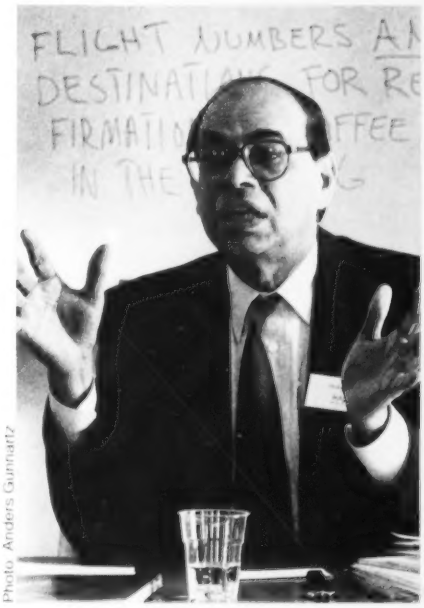


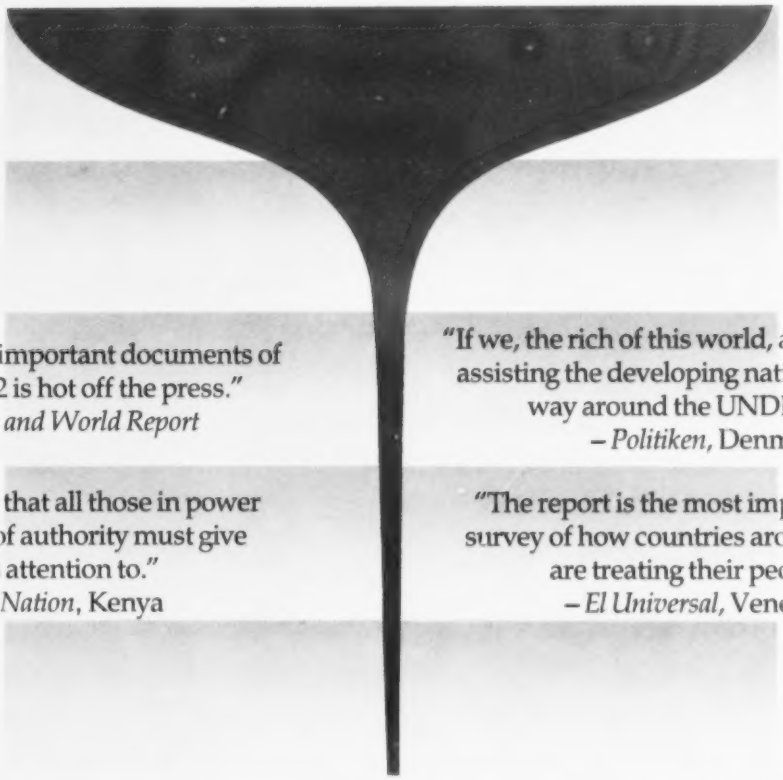
Photo: Anders Gunnartz

Mahbub ul Haq

Europe still in ashes, the seeds of a European Community were being planted, the Marshall Plan was launched and the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions were born. "In the last five years we have witnessed even more dramatic changes," he adds. "But where is the excitement and dialogue that should accompany such change? Where are the Lord Keynes' and Jean Monnets and General Marshalls of today?"

Well aware of the controversial nature of this year's report, Dr. Haq says his intention is not to embarrass nations or international institutions. "Rather," he says, "it is to jar the international conscience, to make people uncomfortable, to invite debate." Our challenge now, he says, "is to carry that debate from country to country." – **Lois Jensen**

Why in the world is everybody talking about the *Human Development Report?*



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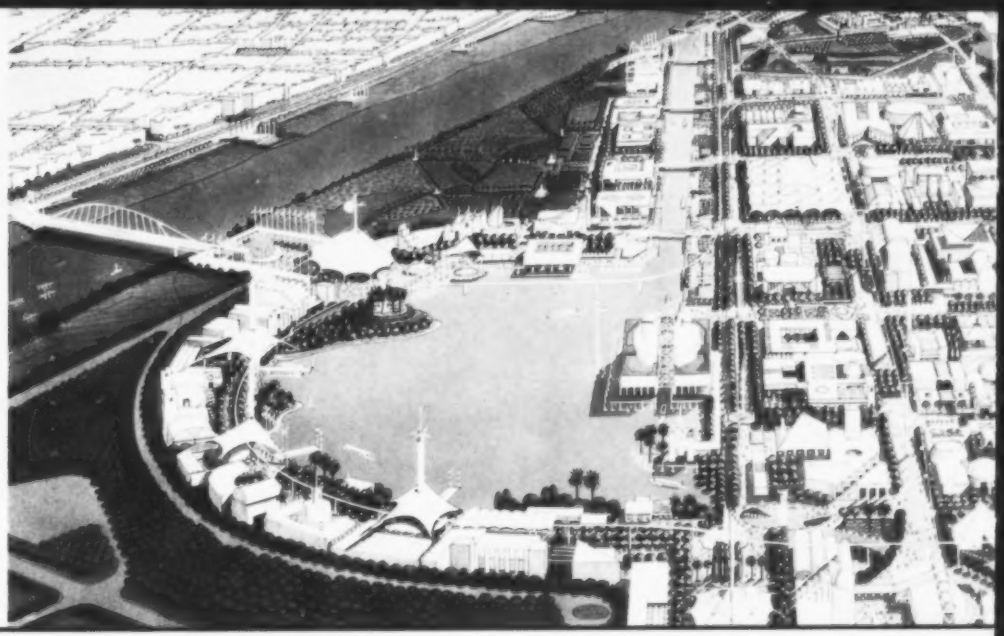

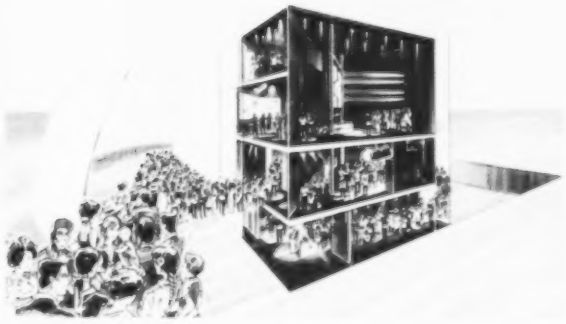

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